

伝説の勇者の伝説 1

昼寝王国の野望

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「って、なんだこいつら」「やばい！ 逃げるぞ!!」
シオンとライナの背後から強烈な光が放たれる！



「ライナは私のこと嫌い？ それとも……」
ライナの腕をつかむキファの手の力が強まる。
しかしライナは……



Prologue I - From The Place Where The God Of Death Dwells

In this place, that was often the case.....

“If.....if we do become adults without dying, would you be willing to marry me?”

The girl with flaxen hair and a gentle looking face said while crying.

In response to that unmotivated look the boy's eyes slackened..... However, in some respect, the dry eyes still had an empty feeling, and they stared back at the wet eyes of that girl.

“If we do become adults without dying.....”

That sort of thing is impossible.

The boy thought.

No, the girl might have also thought that.

Since we'll die.

In this place.....

In this orphanage, death is overflowing.

Death is really overflowing.

Even these two small kids understand to that extent; death is overflowing in the world.

That's why that.....

The girl murmured.

“If we survive.....would you.....”

The boy didn't respond.

Because that girl's murmur, an endless dream that won't come true, like an illusion, was fleetingly heard.

“If we survive.....would you.....”

But her words were then interrupted.

A middle-aged man who wore a black suit on his body, suddenly pulled that girl's small shoulder towards himself, and warned her.

“It's time. The crying ends here. To you, the weakness known as feeling is unnecessary. You'll die if you're weak. It's no more than that.”

Right.

No more than that.

She understands.

The girl makes a frightened expression in an instant,

“.....Yes.”

And then she nodded.

Once, she peered at the boy's face but, the boy, unsmiling like always, with the look of his unmotivated, slackened eyes persisting, is saying no more.

Somehow or other it doesn't seem like he intends to give a response to the girl's words.....

“.....”

That's right.

She understood.

After all since they are going to die, there's no meaning in making a promise like that.

The girl's face froze.

I might never smile again.

That's right, she thought.

"We're going."

Urged by the man, the girl began to walk.

On a path that doesn't have any meaning.....

Doesn't have an objective.

Doesn't have dreams.

Doesn't have hope.

Since from now on she'll become this man's puppet.

A marionette.

And——

"Oi."

At that moment suddenly, the boy raised his voice.

Still lacking ambition, in the same tone of voice as always,

That voice says to her.

"You know, you cry too much. Don't say things like we'll die. If it's you, you'll live. Since you're stubborn. And I don't plan to die either. So....."

The girl looked over her shoulder without thinking. Once more, emotion returned to her face.

Tears were brimming over.

Seeing that, the boy worried, with a troubled look on his face; smiled.....and said.

"So you don't die either."

".....Yeah!"

The girl gave a big nod.

A quick, childhood promise.

That promise, was firmly etched into the girl's heart.....

Chapter 1 El cabeza de chorlito y la ama de casa perfecta

Part 1

A sturdy iron-like fist came flying head on.

Ryner Lute's blank eyes were half-opened as his mind was thinking,

“Ahh~ this will definitely hurt once it hits me...”

He had extremely disheveled black hair, and a pair of gentle eyes that didn't have any drive at all. From that weak and skinny body of his, one could tell that, instead of being lacking in the domineering attitude, he was a very sleepy person, one with zero sense of urgency.

What was even more outrageous was that he did not move even with this iron fist right close at him.

“Ohh~, it's about to hit~...”

He was still able to use such a frivolous tone. In other words, he should be able to dodge the attack.

Yes.

He did have such an ability...

Immediately afterwards.

DOK!!

“Ah!?”

Ryner was sent flying away by that one punch.

Ryner rolled and fell onto the floor in a seemingly deliberate manner as his body twitched and couldn't move after that. I ...Let us correct what was said.

It should be said that it's really hard to tell that he really had such an ability...

Right now, Ryner was in the training academy of the Roland Empire Royal Military Academy. Right now, it was time for actual combat lessons, and all the

students were training...

“...Haa!”

The person who sent Ryner flying sighed and walked up to him before saying,

“I say, Ryner, why are you so unmotivated?”

The one who spoke had red short hair and a pair of similarly red fiery eyes that were full of the will to win. This person's name was Kiefer Knolles, who had a completely different personality from Ryner and was full of enthusiasm. She continued to point at Ryner, who had collapsed on the ground and didn't look like he was going to get up anytime soon.

“I say, stop pretending to be dead. Which person would pretend to twitch and play dead at the same time? Anyone can tell that there's a problem!”

Ryner still answered back with a lazy tone,

“Isn't there one here?”

“Ah! Ah! You're not knocked out yet? Even my grades will drop like crazy when you play dead like that? Who am I going to continue attacking? You hear me? I'm going to use magic! I'm going to start now!”

“Uu...no can do.”

“Who says I can't?”

Nobody could have understood which part of this match looked like a battle when both sides were shouting away at each other. Anyway, Kiefer started to move her hands.

It was a spell unique only to the Republic of Roland, one where a light magic array was drawn in the air and activated.

And the magic array was immediately completed.

“WHAT I SEEK IS THUNDER>>>IZUCHI!”

Immediately, the magic array Kiefer drew out shot a little light through the center, and it was fired at Ryner.

As for Ryner, he looked like he wanted to give up as he looked at this...

“Uu, a lightning spell...I may really be knocked out...”

He didn't even think of dodging it.

Immediately after—

Ryner's entire body took the full brunt of the direct magic as his body was shocked. This time, his body really twitched as he collapsed onto the floor.

“No, no way! Why didn't you dodge?”

Once Kiefer saw this, she frantically ran over to Ryner.

“Oi, are you alright?”

“...”

Ryner didn't answer.

He didn't say anything at all, and wasn't even moving at all...

“No, no way...”

Kiefer's face went pale as she carried Ryner, who was lying limp on the floor, up, and shook him hard to try and wake him.

“I say, Ryner...stop messing around with me! You...no, no way...”

As Kiefer said this, the tired body that was shaken hard by her actually spoke.

“That's right, that's right, I'm dead. So that's the end of lessons for me today...”

“WOULD A DEAD PERSON EVEN TALK!? IDIOT!”

Kiefer sent a punch at Ryner's head without mercy.

“Don't let me worry for nothing...haa...”

She sighed again.

“I say...why are you willing to suffer like this just to skip lessons?”

“I really want to sleep today.”

“When do you ever not want to sleep?”

“I really want to sleep today too.”

“You don't have to deliberately change what you said!”



Both of them continued what looked like a boring conversation of an old couple bickering with each other.

Snickers and mockery could be heard from all over as everyone chatted away.

“An ordinary person wouldn't be able to dodge that deliberately held back spell, right?”

“It's troublesome when someone so weak is studying in our school~so much so that even our school's prestige has dropped drastically.”

“You could have just killed trash like Ryner in one punch!”

Waves of criticizing words continued to echo throughout the practice arena...

That's right.

Ryner was the only student who couldn't catch up.

In this school, it was a cardinal sin. That's because, in this Academy...

The Roland Empire Royal Military Academy was a place full of radicals gathered from all over the country.

Some of them were orphans, and some of them were A-class criminal children.

These children couldn't find any footing to stabilize themselves in society. They couldn't find jobs nor food, and these people who had nothing were gathered here.

Their only wish was to gain the ability to become the tools of war.

These children continued to hone their skills day and night in order to sell themselves to the army for a high price.

This was different from an ordinary cadet school.

This was an existing mechanism to train soldiers to fight while trying its hardest not to let nobility or ordinary citizens enter the front lines.

Even so...

As there hadn't been any wars during these past few years, there hasn't been any sense of urgency like what it was designed for. However...

Once war broke out, the people who belong to this school will be the first ones sent onto the battlefield.

Even if Ryner and the rest were young and about 17 years old.

Back to the main story—

On hearing these hurting words that weren't new, Kiefer continued to lecture Ryner over and over again.

“Really, you! Don't you feel troubled at all, Ryner? I say, don't you feel anything at all?”

But for some reason, Ryner's face suddenly showed an intent to fight.

“What's the matter? Okay, let's do it! I got a setback because of everyone's criticism and can't recover for the time being, so I can't continue with lessons today...”

“Don't you even think of using this situation for that. I will never allow you to skip lessons!”

“Really?”

“Really!”

“Ugh.”

To any bystander, these two's conversation would look just like a pair of lovers hitting on each other.

That's also one of the reasons why Ryner was rejected by everyone at this Academy.

As a cheery, above-average in looks, and exceptionally kind and gentle girl, even to the straggler Ryner, Kiefer was said to have many admirers.

However, the person herself didn't realize this at all.

Even so, Ryner would often go out to sleep when he had time, even when it was a bright sunny day, and Kiefer, who would go out and nag at him, was more troubling than the other classmates who viewed him as an outcast...

Because of these reasons, Ryner was treated as such today.

“You might as well vanish, Ryner!”

“Bothersome guy!”

“Completely useless. Why are you still in the Academy anyway?”

Everyone continued to deride Ryner, who ignored them completely.

Ryner continued to maintain his sleepy expression as he looked at these people who were humiliating him.

These three were of the same year as him, and prided themselves on their muscular bodies.

Ryner ignored their scoldings and said,

“See, Kiefer? Everyone said so. I guess today's lesson will be...”

At this moment, a clear and loud voice suddenly interrupted Ryner as he continued to find an excuse to skip lessons without remorse.

“Everyone, before criticizing Ryner, shouldn't you be training yourself?”

The one who appeared was a man who had glamorous silver hair tied behind him, golden eyes that had strong and sharp will, and with a rather good figure. The aura this boy possessed really made it hard for people to believe that he was of the same age as Ryner as he had the presence of elegance all around him.

He was Sion Astal.

His grades were the best.

Even inside the Academy, he became a focal figure. He gathered the students who adored him together to form a group.

However, let us not explain his role in the Academy. There's no real need to describe it.

Most importantly, he was of nobility.

Nobility.

A noble existence should be the furthest away from here.

So why was Sion here...?

Even so, this enigma that many people had questions about didn't have any significant meaning to a certain person...

“Fuwaaa...I really want to sleep.”

“I say. Sion deliberately came all the way here to help you out. Why are you ignoring him?”

“Eh? Did you say help me out?”

It seemed that throughout this ground-breaking moment, the thoroughly listless Ryner didn't show any interest in this.

Sion glanced aside, looked at Ryner who continued to play the fool, and his lips loosened up.

He again looked over at those three muscle men.

“Seems like you people are rather free. In that case, I'll play along. This period of lessons hasn't ended anyway.”

The three muscle men curled their large and muscular bodies back.

“Eh, ah, no, we don't wish to fight against Mr Sion. Am I right? “

“Ah, yeah! We're just seeing Ryner as an eyesore...”

“Ye, yeah! We never thought of going against you.”

The trio timidly looked over at Sion's expressions and exchanged words.

From such trivial things, one could tell that Sion was gradually increasing his standing in the school.

Sion himself gave an uninterested look and nodded his head.

“Really...however—”

Immediately, his face showed a mischievous smile, and he then said,

“Listen you, the instructors are looking at us. If you give up on the chance to fight against me, you may be seen as running away from battle and get penalized for this. If you don't mind, be my guest.”

“Uu...”

On hearing this, the trio couldn't help but moan.

Sion was right. The Academy they were studying at would hope to deal with the army at the highest price, and everyone was training hard to increase their scores.

Only a rare few, like Ryner, wouldn't even bother with grades.

Sion still continued to smile and said,

“What do you say?”

The trio still looked stunned, and after a while answered,

“Da, damn it! Bring it on then.”

On hearing this, Sion's smile carried even more of a meaning.

“Then, please don't hold back. How about all three of you have a go at once?”

And the battle started.

Amongst the trio, two of them moved their arms and started to draw a magic array. The remaining person lunged over at Sion.

On seeing this, Kiefer gave an exaggerated expression as she nodded her head and said,

“Un, that's a really commendable strategy. One person will hold him off while the other two use magic to deal the fatal blow to him.”

“Ohh~”

Ryner carelessly answered back.

Unexpectedly and for some reason, Kiefer knocked Ryner on the head again.

“Really, you! I explained it so nicely to you already! Look at Sion's movements carefully and see how he plans to attack enemies who attack like this!”

While both of them continued with their random talk, Ryner continued to look at this battle with blank and lost eyes. At this moment, a man suddenly attacked.

The man had a large body that looked like the muscles were overgrown, but the punch he swung was rather fast and nimble.

However.

Dok!

Sion easily dodged the man's punch, and as their bodies crossed path, he slammed a kick right into the man's neck.

“uu..”

This kick caused the man to immediately collapse onto the ground.

Sion didn't stop as he ran towards a man who was drawing the magic array.

“Ah? Eh? Wa!”

Sion's punch landed directly on the man's face, and the man couldn't react in time as he collapsed.

There was only one person left.

However, this person had already finished drawing his magic array.

Now he just needed to cast it.

Now, how will he intend to attack Sion...?

On seeing that his comrades were levelled just like that, the man showed a pale expression and started chanting.

“WHAT I SEEK IS LIGHTNING>>>...”

Though the man finished chanting, Sion, who looked back and saw the last enemy, gave a casual smile.

“Shut your mouth!”

Before he finished talking, Sion kicked the sand on the ground.

“WAH!”

The man's vision was blocked by the sand that was whipped up, and inadvertently used his hands to block his face.

How could Sion possibly let such a perfect opening slip by...

The man's hand that was drawing the magic array was twirled by Sion, and he was sent flying out.

The battle ended cleanly just like that.

Sion looked like nothing happened at all as he stood at his original place and lazily rotated his neck around.

“So you're only of such standard...”

Sion won in an overwhelming fashion.

The difference in ability was too great.

“...”

Everyone training inside the practice arena was amazed and stunned by Sion's highly skilled tactics, and all went silent.

As everyone looked at Sion, their eyes were filled with envy and jealousy.

Of course, Sion bore these complicated looks.

He looked just like a natural hero as he simply amazed others.

However, only Ryner still didn't show any signs that he was impressed or jealous at all as he still looked like he really wanted to sleep. He reached his hand out and patted Kiefer, who was similarly amazed and speechless, on the shoulder.

“You say that you want me to learn the movements just now?”

“Ah? I mean...uu, I guess not...”

“So you finally understand? For today's lesson, I'll...uu...”

At this moment, the bell rang.

That's the signal to show that the lesson ended.

At this moment, everyone in the practice arena cheered and started to walk back to their own rooms like fish swimming about.

On seeing this, Ryner showed a disappointed look.

“Damn it...I didn't manage to skip lessons...”

“...I say, what are you rambling about again? You're just sleeping!”

Kiefer gave a shocked expression as she said that.

However, Ryner's expression became gloomier.

“But because of your nagging, Kiefer, I ended up going for all the lessons, you know?”

“May I know what the problem is?”

“There's way too many problems. If I get a good impression from the instructors and make myself outstanding, I will be forced to get lots of useless and troublesome work. What should I do then?”

Ryner could actually say such things with a serious face. Kiefer continued to look at his face for a while and hugged her head in a reluctant manner.

“If you become outstanding like this, Ryner, I feel that I can look forward to the day where I rise up to be a god...”

At this moment, a voice rang.

“Wahaha! Your dreams are really incredible...in that case, when you become a god, Kiefer, I pray that you'll grant me happiness too.”

It was Sion.

Unknowingly, Sion was standing between the duo who were sitting on the ground and discussing.

“Eh, ah, Sion...no, Mr Astal!? We, well...how, HOW DO YOU KNOW MY NAME?”

Kiefer was so nervous that her voice became shrill.

On seeing this, Sion couldn't help but give a wry smile.

“Just call me Sion. As for how I know your name...I practically memorized the names of all the students that were more outstanding.”

“Ah? More outstanding...?”

Sion nodded his head.

“Kiefer Knolles. Obtains above average grades in all subjects, outgoing personality, nice appearance and loved by everyone.”

“Ah? No, well...since when am I pretty looking...”

Having been praised by Sion like this, Kiefer's entire face went red, but

continued to give an embarrassed look, “Wha, what should I do, Ryner? He called me pretty. Ahaha, ahahaha!”

Kiefer started chuckling to herself meaninglessly.

Beside him, Ryner whispered,

“Way too hot.”

PA!

He took a punch to the back of the head.

Sion looked at this stupid exchange between the two of them for quite a while, and then said to Kiefer,

“It's like this. I have a proposal, Kiefer. Do you want to serve under me?”

“Eh? Serve?”

“Un. The Academy will split students into different groups to enhance training and carry out battles as units. If you're willing to work under me, I can work through backdoor means and let you be drafted into the same class as me. You should understand how beneficial it should be if you can be of the same class as me.”

“Bu...but, you need some talented people, right Mr Astal...no, un, Sion? Someone like me...”

“That's not true. You have talent. I won't let you regret this.”

Once Sion said that, he smiled. His smile had an abnormal glow as every action of his gave the vibes of a good youth.

Even though Sion assured her, Kiefer still remained undecided. For some reason, she seemed to be deliberately glancing at Ryner.

“But...”

“What's there to worry about, Kiefer? Didn't he say that it would be beneficial to you? Just go? I can sleep everyday if that's the case...”

Before Ryner could even finish with his nonsense, he saw Kiefer giving a sad look for some reason, and inadvertently shut up.

At this moment, Sion spoke again.

“Ah, is that so? Of course, I intended to have Ryner come under me too.”

Immediately thereafter,

“Really?”

“Ah~that's too troublesome. I'll pass~”

Kiefer and Ryner cried out at the same time.

“WHAT DID YOU SAY!?”

And then, Kiefer started to chide,

“Why not? That's a glorious thing! Everyone knows that you can be outstanding when you follow Sion!”

However, Ryner wasn't moved by Kiefer's words and obviously showed some unhappiness.

“I said no~! When you're outstanding, won't you be forced to do lots of things you don't want to do at all? As for me, I feel that the day can end if I can get a good nap. Such a life will then be meaningful...”

“Such a life can't be called meaningful!”

“Eh? Is that so?”

“Yeah! Really, you. I knew that you're such a person already, so that's why I called you to shut up. Just follow what I say...”

But at this moment, Ryner interrupted Kiefer and gave a casual look, before saying,

“Speaking of which...why would someone look for me? Who doesn't know how bad my grades are? No matter how I think about this, I feel that Sion only wants Kiefer~”

For some reason, Ryner's words made Kiefer's face twist with sadness.

Ryner didn't understand why Kiefer would have such an expression and tilted his head in a doubtful manner.

However, no matter what, what Ryner said was sound.

It was true that it's strange for someone to look for Ryner.

Sion came to look for Ryner merely to make it easier to pull Kiefer in. Because...well, personal reasons can't be stated. Everyone knows that Ryner's grades were often in the last few, and he said himself that had no will to fight...

Unless it's someone really intrigued, nobody would think of taking in such a person...

Either way, there's definitely a catch to this.

At this moment, Kiefer gave a depressed expression and muttered,

“Stupid Ryner...if you can't even look up to yourself...we'll be forced to separate from each other...”

However, Sion interrupted Kiefer's words at this moment and said with a beaming smile,

“Don't say that. It seemed that you're mistaken, Ryner. I really want you to work under me.”

“Ah? Why?”

Ryner looked dazed as he asked.

Sion smiled as he said,

“Un, if I have to put it, we're really compatible? You didn't look amazed or envious when you saw me. I'm really interested in you when you give such a dazed look.”

“In other words, wa...you mean that you've fallen in love with me? Uu...sorry...in that case, it's all the more reason why I can't work under you...”

Because of that, Ryner randomly came up with a reason and still refused Sion in the end. No, it should be said that he never wanted to get involved with anyone in the first place. First, he felt that this was too much of a hassle. Second, he had no interest in becoming famous.

However, he still couldn't understand why whenever he refused Sion's invitation, Kiefer will show a sad look...

“Ahh, I really feel like sleeping for some reason...”

However, he wasn't motivated enough to be bothered by such a thing.

Thus, Kiefer dejectedly lowered her head for some reason,

“In that case, I...”

At this moment, Sion's expression remained unchanged as the smile that a kind youth would have become a demonic smile.



He then brought his face to Ryner's ears...

“Oi, I say, don't put yourself too highly just because I called you personally, Ryner. Didn't I say that we're compatible? I want you with that 'Alpha Stigma'.”

“WHAT DID YOU SAY?”

Immediately, Ryner's listless body leaped away from Sion and got far away.

He showed an obviously panicked look as he said,

“Yo, you, what are you saying...the 'Alp...'no...ugh, I don't understand that thing at all...”

However, Sion showed that kind youthful smile he showed before and said,

“Ryner, why must you be so humble? I know that you are hiding your true ability. I personally went to the orphanage you lived in last time.”

“You...”

Immediately, Ryner froze. However, he still tried to think of a way to look calm and continued,

“Wha, what are you spouting? I'm really lost here. Okay, I'm going. It's troublesome to be working under someone else...”

After saying that, Ryner turned around as his back faced Sion and used his clumsy feet to try and move away.

But...

That carefree voice still chased Ryner from behind.

“If you're not going to work with me, I'll reveal your secret. I'm going to say everything. You should know what will happen if your hidden ability is revealed, right?”

“Ugh...”

On hearing that, Ryner stopped.

'Alpha Stigma'.

People would often describe this term with fear and disgust.

Normally, that would be the case. However...

Ryner sighed and turned around.

He used his loose and limp eyes to look at the good youth Sion who was still smiling.

“You know of my past, and yet you still want me?”

And then, Sion smiled cheerily.

“If I don't want you, I guess nobody else would, right? So, what do you plan to do? Will you work under me? Or...”

“Ugh...haa, okay, okay. I got it. I'll work with you. Really...do you recruit your allies with such threatening means? You really are a demon, right?”

Ryner said. For some reason, Sion showed a wry smile.

“We're about the same here. Okay, that's it. We're sorting out classes in two days. I'll get ready and arrange for you two to be in my class. Let's work hard from now on!”

After saying that, Sion hurriedly left.

Ryner sighed as he watched the profile leave. Then, Kiefer asked in a puzzled manner,

“Eh? Hey? What's going on? So you're Sion's ally too, Ryner, right?”

On hearing that, Ryner sighed harder.

“...Looks like things got even more out of hand...”

“Really, you! You finally got a path where you can show yourself to be outstanding. Stop saying such deflating things! Ah, but...”

At this moment, Kiefer immediately pondered.

“Just now, didn't Sion mention something about you having a hidden ability or something, Ryner? What does that mean?”

Once Kiefer asked that, Ryner couldn't help but be terrified.

However, he still tried to hide it.

“Nothing. Do you feel that I am someone who has such an ability?”

Kiefer stared at Ryner for a while and then decidedly shook her head.

“Doesn't look like it.”

“Oi, don't deny it just like that~”

“But it just doesn't feel like it. Ah, if I have to really put it, is he saying that your lack of fighting will is so outstanding? Maybe that's it. As an elite, maybe Sion saw your laziness, Ryner, and wanted it to be a refresher in his busy life...ah, maybe that's it. I'll feel happy too when I'm with Ryner.”

Kiefer said these words that Ryner felt were rather rude as she continued to nod away. Ryner couldn't help but stare at her in disbelief.

“Are you saying that you're living such tense days every day?”

On hearing that, Kiefer's expression darkened.

“Fuu...a pure girl has lots of things to worry about...”

“Oh...excuse me, where's the acting practice area? There are creatures called girls who are worth being praised...OW! I was just joking! Don't hit me! WAH!!!”

Ryner muttered as he frantically ran around helter-skelter, dodging Kiefer's fist that was among the top in practical fights.

The peaceful sun covered the entire practice field.

Part 2

School life was as peaceful as ever.

A peaceful daily life.

The Roland Empire, which was ravaged by war, gained temporary peace due to a 7 year ceasefire.

Roland, which was located at the southern end of the Menoris Continent, was surrounded by 3 countries.

One of them was the Imperial Nelpha.

Though the country of Roland wasn't really on good terms with this country, it wasn't that bad that they would start waging war with each other.

Another one was the Runa Empire.

As of now, the Roland Empire and the Runa Empire were allies. However, this wasn't really worth noticing.

The biggest problem was the third country.

The Kingdom of Estabul.

Roland had waged war against this country for almost 4 generations.

Nobody knew the reason why the war lasted that long.

There were many problems in the past. Some said that the conquered territory was a problem, but now it became such that it was an eye for an eye.

The war between both sides continued one year after another.

All the residents of Roland had experienced war, generation after generation.

That's right.

This country was usually filled with the presence of death.

Until 7 years ago...

The war that wasn't showing any signs of ending continued to drain the country's resources, causing the country itself to deteriorate. Both sides were worried that if this kept up, both Roland and Estabul would be worn out, allowing other countries to invade them. Thus, both sides had a ceasefire 7 years ago.

And thus, unlike the past, the peaceful days that were really unbelievable continued...

Either way, 7 years is a long time.

Unlike the adults who were easily caught in the past, the children recovered really quickly and even forgot all about it.

Or it could be said that the children themselves were already used to such peaceful lives.

As for how serious it was...

"I say, Ryner! Didn't I tell you not to walk and sleep at the same time?"

"S, stop spouting nonsense. How can someone walk and sleep at the same time? I'm fully awake!"

"You were sleeping! You were sleeping! I saw it!"

"Uu...well, I only slept for about 10 minutes. What's the problem?"

"It's not about whether there's a problem, I'm just amazed that you can even sleep on a road up the hill for 10 minutes."

And so...

They were so used to peace that someone could sleepwalk.

Kiefer continued to roar at Ryner, who didn't show any enthusiasm.

"Anyway! You can't sleep in battle! A simulation battle is a team battle. If you sleep, Ryner, you'll cause trouble to class rep Sion and everyone else in the class! You should know..."

But at this moment, Kiefer's roars were interrupted by a girl's voice from behind.

"Sorry, I have a little issue...Kiefer, I find that your voice is too loud. Up till now, I've been trying to tiptoe so that I won't let out any footsteps. It doesn't seem useful now that you're shouting like this."

Kiefer was shocked that she was told off.

"Eh? Ah? Well, uu...so, sorry."

Kiefer went silent.

Looking back, a girl who was drafted into the same class in this operation was looking rather shocked at Ryner.

Fualu Penny. This short, petite and bespectacled girl had droopy looking eyes, and didn't look like an athletic girl. In fact, she was often the top in secret operations, and one of the talents Sion drafted in.

Another person, Tony, who often gave a glum look and had a rather faint existence, then said unhappily,

"Yeah. Fualu's right. You're way too noisy."

Then, someone else spoke.

"What's the matter? Just stick with Sion's plan, and it'll be a really easy win for us in this mock training. No problems no problems♪"

The reasonable Tai then continued on.

These three, along with Ryner, Kiefer and Sion, were 6 people altogether.

Other than Ryner, the rest all had outstanding grades in some aspects.

On another note, Sion had other allies as well, but they were all sorted out to different classes. It seemed that Sion made some arrangements for his allies so that they would not face off against him in the grading classes...

So basically, this Academy was holding an inter-class scrimmage test. In this battle around a hill, the enemies were students who didn't rely on Sion, so they were not to be underestimated.

Thus—

“Uu~I’m really sorry.”

Kiefer’s voice became softer.

Perhaps Sion witnessed all of this as he was right at the back. He said,

“Ah, it’s alright. Just follow my plan. We won’t lose at all.”

Ryner then continued,

“Yeah yeah. Actually, to me, it doesn’t matter whether we win or lose. So how about everyone take a good nap over here today...”

““““WHO CARES ABOUT YOU!!!???””””

Everyone else in the class lashed out at Ryner. From this, it seemed that these comrades seemed to have a certain amount of chemistry in their communication.

Other than someone who really lacked the will to fight...

Well, let’s not talk about this person for now.

As stated just now, the mock battle was held in an inter-class format.

Each class was set to depart from different spots around the hill, and the training would continue until they completely eliminated each other, no matter how many days it might take.

Of course, this hill couldn’t be considered small, so it was rather difficult to discover each side’s whereabouts, and each class had to find ways to gather food themselves. In other words, this was a rather difficult lesson that required all sorts of cognitive abilities.

But without an instructor around, maybe it shouldn’t really be considered a lesson...

On a side note, the main aim of this lesson wasn’t just to sort out the winners and losers. What they did when they discovered the enemy till they eliminate them also affected their grades.

Of course, the shorter the time, the better. That’s something to be expected, right?

Thus,

In this situation, the plan Sion came up with was...

Part 3

Before they left, as they entered that artificial field before entering the hilly region, Sion said confidently, "Okay, then we're going to defeat the enemy completely within 5 hours."

Immediately,

"Haa!?"

Other than Ryner, the other four cried out in shock.

Of course, even the most easygoing Tai looked rather gloomy.

"Do, don't kid around, Sion. Isn't that too much? No matter how good I am, I can't possibly do so within 5 hours...how do you expect us to track the enemy down in such a short time?"

But Sion still smiled.

"I never talked about looking for the enemy. I already know. I know where our opponent started off from."

"Ah? You're saying that you know?"

Kiefer couldn't help but ask in return, and Sion nodded his head nonchalantly,

"Un. I already checked which class would be our opponent, right? Where they start from too. We just need to ambush them, wait for them to come up, and then strike them..."

"Wait a sec!"

Kiefer interrupted Sion at this moment.

"But...isn't this equivalent to cheating?"

Kiefer said her words so plainly, yet Sion still remained unmoved.

"Un, that can be said. However, my view is that this is a strategy. Speaking of

which, isn't this lesson about testing our cognitive ability? I don't think that checking up on our opponent before we battle is a form of cheating. I don't feel that way. I even think that using all actions in a battle...no, in a war will be justified. In that case, my action is correct."

Sion tried to justify his actions with a thick face, and Ryner used his lazy voice to say,

"Un~ sounds rather righteous, but I feel that someone digging into other people's past so randomly is no different from a pervert."

Ryner's history of being an 'Alpha Stigma' bearer was investigated, so he was still reserved about being forced to join this group...

However, Ryner's words just went in and out of Sion's ears.

"Hm? What you mean to say is that you don't want me to say what the girl you dumped said?"

"Ah!? What do you...!"

But at this moment, Ryner was held back from behind by the other two guys.
By Tai and Tony...

And his mouth was even stuffed up.

"Fuuunyofuo!?"

Ryner couldn't talk.

After checking that Ryner wouldn't obstruct her, she nodded her head and said,

"Okay, who did you say was dumped by Ryner?"

Tai then said,

"What kind of girl?"

Fualu then said,

"Ah~ talking about love like this really makes a heart flutter~..."

These two weren't the only ones talking as even the normally reserved and quiet Tony kept his usual gloomy look and said, "How far did Ryner and that girl

progress? I want to see if I can forgive Ryner.”

He actually said such terrifying words.

Everyone was interested by this...

And Sion then glanced at Ryner before giving a devilish-smile.

“According to what I heard, it seems that Ryner confessed to his teacher at the orphanage...”

“FunyofuOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOOO!!!!!!???”

Ryner couldn't help but cry out in anguish.

Part 4

Let's not talk about such useless things.

Back to the hill.

Everyone was moving about in the hills like that for 2 hours.

Normally speaking, they should be near the starting point of the opponent.

Other than Ryner, everyone else looked tense as they started carefully observing their surroundings.

At this moment,

“Fuua~gya!?”

Ryner yawned loudly, and Tai sent a punch to shut him up,

And then used a suppressed voice to scold,

“Have you had enough? That's enough, you cake eater! The enemy's nearby!”

Upon hearing that, Ryner frowned.

“Wha, what cake eater...I said that it wasn't the case! I was only six back then! And the teacher at the orphanage...”

But everyone denied him the chance to speak.

For some reason, even Kiefer slammed a punch from behind.

“What only six! You sex maniac!”

“Tha, that was just Sion's nonsense! Think of it as a normal person! How could such a thing happen? ARGH, YOU BETTER REMEMBER THIS, SION!”

Ryner was going crazy and shouting, and Sion continued to smile calmly,

“Fufu...now you know the ability to control and manipulate information is something that's of necessity, right?”

“WHAT KIND OF NECESSITY IS THAT! I’LL DEFINITELY...”

Ryner shouted, and this time, Sion was the one who covered his mouth. He placed a finger at his lips.

“Quiet. Dear guests, we’ve arrived behind the enemy.”

Sion’s words made everyone quiet down.

Even Ryner, who was being held down, looked up, and saw people moving through the gaps between the trees.

There was a familiar gang of six boys and girls talking to each other.

Without a doubt, it was them.

Ryner and company didn’t even need 4 hours. They spent only slightly more than 2 hours before discovering the enemy.

This was really something shocking.

However, Ryner wasn’t interested in this at all...

Tai spoke,

“That’s great. The opponent hasn’t discovered us. Let’s attack, Sion!”

Then, Tony spoke in a vague manner,

“No, we’ll be done for if the enemy sets a trap. We should be more cautious.”

Then, Kiefer said,

“Sion, what should we do?”

Sion finally spoke,

“No, we’ll take action immediately.”

Immediately thereafter, Sion’s eyes narrowed. His lips didn’t give a casual smile, but looked as vicious as a beast that found its prey.

“We’ll win easily. Let’s defeat the enemy and set the quickest time record in this lesson. Go!”

After saying that, Sion leaped out.

On seeing this, everyone was stunned. They finally woke up once he easily

took down two of them.

“He, he did it!”

Everyone hurriedly leaped out.

And thus...

Basically, this was a development that's to be expected, but the outcome was soon decided.

In the end, it took them only 2 hours and 52 minutes to eliminate the opponent completely.

There was only 1 casualty.

On a side note, the so called casualty was that Ryner tumbled and fell down in this raid that should be an easy win.

Because of that, the class got a few points subtracted off, and everyone in the class obviously didn't want Ryner to forget this as he was told off by them...

Part 5

Soon after...

At a small old hotel in one of the back alleys.

The sound of birds chirping could be heard. However, as Ryner walked out from the hotel and looked up at the sky, the dark was still dark.

It seemed that there will still be some time till daylight.

Ryner took clumsy steps as he left the exit of the hotel and sat down on the road right in front of it.

“Uu~ that was bad...I knew that I can’t drink yet I continued to drink...”

He moaned with a weak expression.

And then, he laid down right in the middle of the road, trying his best to ignore a certain something that will rise up his throat.

“Speaking of which, I didn’t think Kiefer’s tolerance was so bad...”

He looked at the sky that may be blocked by the clouds as the clouds couldn’t be seen clearly, and muttered.

That’s the situation.

The class Ryner and gang belonged to made history by becoming the class that set the record for the shortest time in the mock battle training, and became heroes in the Academy. No, it should be said that because everyone knew that Sion led this class, Sion became a hero...

Tai felt that this was worth celebrating over, and several of Sion’s allies joined in too, causing this to become a celebration party.

There is a rule that was to be mentioned,

According to the laws of Roland, only those above the age of 22 could drink.

On another side note:

The oldest students of Roland Empire's Royal Military were only 19, and what is...?

No, there's no real need to look into this...

Ryner tried his best to suppress the disgusting urge as he muttered to himself to try changing his mood.

"That Sion, what cake eater did he just say...causing me to be called a lady killer for some reason...one of these days, I must grab that guy by his braids..."

At this moment, a voice called,

"I have no braids for you to grab on to."

Sion crouched down and looked at Ryner's face.

Immediately thereafter, Ryner continued to remain on the floor as he backed away agilely.

"Don't appear in front of me like that, you demon!"

On hearing that, Sion grimaced.

"Yo, the famous lady killer."

"I'M NOT A LADY KILLER—!?"

On roaring, Ryner felt really tired and sighed, regained that lazy expression, and said,

"Then, why are you here? Shouldn't you be the main character of this success party?"

At this moment, for some reason, Sion showed a rare large smile that was vastly different from one a good youth should have, one that only Ryner had seen before, a vicious demonic smile that had some complicated emotions in them.

"Didn't I say that I don't have braids? I drugged everyone. You and I are the only ones awake."

"Is that so? So everyone's asleep?"

“Un.”

At this moment, both of them went silent.

Ryner looked up at the sky and started to daze around.

Sion lay down beside him.

“Ryner.”

“Hm? If you want me to create a love scene between two guys, no thanks.”

On hearing this, Sion gave a wry smile.

“Why would I do that? What I mean is...will you tell me? Why you came to this Academy...”

“Ah? Why mention that all of a sudden?”

“Uu...”

Sion nodded his head, and continued,

“Your grades are at the bottom, and your attendance isn’t good, and you wouldn’t agree to join me even when I asked you. From this, I can tell that you have no intention of being outstanding through this path. So why is such a person at the academy? This really intrigued me.”

Ryner continued to look at sky and said with a lazy tone.

“Well...haven’t you checked on it before? You should know why I had to come to this academy, right...?”

“Ah, you got me...”

Now that Ryner mentioned it, Sion couldn’t help but chuckle.

“To be honest, I did check on it, on the orphanage you were at...”

And then, he paused before continuing in a rather happy tone.

“The orphanage you grew up in was Roland Special Institute #307...on paper, it was an institution to raise children orphaned by war until they were old enough to be independent. However...that wasn’t really the case. They only gathered children with potential and gave them thorough military training. Those who couldn’t show their potential were disposed of, and most of those

who survived were sold to nobles for high prices or thrown onto the frontlines to enter the war...”

“ ...”

Ryner remained silent as his listless eyes continued to look at the sky...

Sion continued,

“You were raised in that kind of place. Unexpectedly, the war ended...even so, that orphanage still remained during the few years after the war. But without war, that sort of place—that facility which trained children through forceful means and kill them once it was discovered they have no talent—it was just a testbed for criminals. Thus, you were forced to make a choice. Accept the arrangements and continue to be managed by the military, or be silenced...you chose the former, entered the Roland Empire’s Royal Military Academy... am I right?”

Ryner didn’t answer Sion and remained stunned for a while. He really didn’t look very enthusiastic, which made Sion worry whether he was asleep or not. Was Ryner actually asleep?

However, Ryner frowned a little and said,

“Un~ it was so long already. It’s a bit nostalgic for someone to talk about my history in such detail. However, things weren’t really as serious as you said. On one hand, I really felt that this was nothing much. Besides, I even told my instructor: ‘can we get married?’”

After saying that, Ryner started laughing to himself.

However, it was one with a somewhat self-mocking attitude.

Sion gave the self-mocking Ryner a stern look.

“I say, Ryner.”

“What? Don’t be so formal.”

“You...”

At this moment, Sion paused.

And then, he said with a slow tone as it seems that he was deliberately

choosing his words,

“Ryner, haven’t you thought about taking revenge on this country?”

“Ah? Revenge?”

Not expecting Sion’s words to be so shocking, Ryner couldn’t help but ask back in surprise. Sion then nodded his head and stood up, He walked over to the middle of the road Ryner was lying on, turned around, and said,

“Haven’t you thought of overturning this corrupt country? Your ‘Alpha Stigma’ alone caused you to be rejected by the entire country. This is a country with unequal status amongst its people, a country that oppresses the weak and fights without ending. A foolish king, and even foolish nobility.”

On hearing Sion’s words, Ryner frowned and said,

“Oi oi, you’ll be executed if other people heard you say that.”

But Sion merely smiled.

“Maybe. But you who hate this country wouldn’t sell me out, right?”

Ryner’s eyebrows frowned even more.

“I won’t say it because I don’t want trouble.”

“Ahaha, I know that this isn’t your real reason.”

“Don’t decide that yourself and read into me.”

Sion couldn’t accept whatever Ryner said.

He said in a direct tone,

“I want to take action, Ryner. I want to change everything. I have been working hard, searching throughout this academy to recruit allies who haven’t relied on the nobles. However...this plan’s about to end soon. I have more than enough forces.”

Sion let go of both hands.

“I want to become the king to this country. I want to change everything. So Ryner, join me. I will help you to make a world you can look forward to.”

After saying that, Sion reached his hand out to Ryner.

Sion's face showed a look of confidence.

The silver hair was glowing, and the sharp eyes showed intense will.

Obviously, he was different from an ordinary person.

He just looked so dazzling.

If there was a need to describe him, he was like a demon who was shooting arrows at a god, or a god that purges evil...

This person just looked like he was born with the nature to be a hero.

Also, he had ability and charisma...

He will become a king.

Sion was giving off a presence that seemed to show that he was about to quickly fulfill what could only be described as a 'dream'.

And Sion spoke again.

"Join me, Ryner."

In this situation, any ordinary person would likely be swallowed by Sion's overwhelming charisma.

However...

The one we're talking about here was Ryner.

In this situation, after hearing this, Ryner's response was,

"I see. So you want the throne, Sion? But it sounds bothersome...sorry, I'll pass. Ah, but when you become king someday, Sion, can you write a law such that sleepy and lazy people can get more promotions easily?"

He said this with a lazy voice.

His expression just looked like he really wanted to sleep as the lazy black eyes didn't show any will at all.

There was no glow in his eyes at all.

If one had to make a comparison, he's either a puppy or a kitty that's having an afternoon nap...

Sion's struggles were thoroughly annihilated by this person who didn't have any will at all. For just that moment, he showed a thoroughly shocked look.

"Guu...a, ahaha!!"

He started laughing.

"That, that's too funny! Ahaha. I see. So maybe that's the reason why I wanted you. Maybe it has nothing to do with the 'Alpha Stigma'...you're the first person who didn't react to me at all."

"Ever since I was born, god made it such that I won't react to guys at all."

At this moment, Sion gave a mischievous smile.

"Are you only interested in mature women?"

Sion deliberately joked, causing Ryner to look unhappy.

"I'M NEVER GOING TO BE YOUR ALLY!"

"AHAHA!!"

Sion laughed.

He was laughing like a naïve child.

Ryner looked at him...

Suddenly, Ryner's eyes caught something behind Sion...

"Eh?"

Everything happened here.

Several men in black attire were standing behind Sion unknowingly, drawing magic arrays in the air.

Anyone who studied Roland's magic could tell that someone who's creating a magic array like this was intending to use a kind of spell.

It was a light that's released from the center of the magic array, a spell with tracking capability and had tremendous destructive ability.

And right now, this spell's locked onto Ryner and Sion, gradually forming...

"Eh, who are these people?"

Just when Ryner was stunned, Sion took action.

“Not good, run!”

Sion grabbed Ryner on the collar and dragged him as he ran.

“WA, WAA, WAAAAHH!! WAIT A SEC! IT HURTS! SION, IT HURTS HURTS HURTS!!”

Ryner’s face was dragged on the ground just like that as he grumbled.

“If it hurts, run! You’ll die if they catch up!”

“Ah? You’re saying that I’ll die...? Why? I haven’t done anything bad? Do, don’t tell me there’s a new law that I’ll be executed for taking naps in the day?”

In such a serious situation, Ryner’s words showed no sign of tension at all. Sion didn’t bother and shouted, “I’LL EXPLAIN TO YOU LATER. ANYWAY, LET’S RUN!”

“O, okay!”

Once Ryner said that, he used his hands to skillfully hit the ground, and while he wasn’t getting in the way of Sion, who was running forward, he leapt up from the ground.

One really couldn’t tell that this was something a person viewed as a loser at the academy with zero athleticism could pull off...

On seeing this, Sion gave a wry smile and said,

“Alright, around this corner...”

Before he even finished, a strong ray of light immediately attacked them from behind the corner...

Both of them turned around at the same time.

That light was obviously of magic. It may be from those mysterious men in black clothing, a destructive spell of light called ‘Kuuri’.

Sion shouted.

“RYNER, JUMP!”

“WAHH!!?”

Just like that, these two tried hard to jump into a small gap between the brick houses.

Immediately,

The intense light exploded. The house that took the brunt of impact was completely destroyed as the light went through it and into the house.

It really was an amazing amount of destructive power.

The enemy's actions were merciless, and they were obviously not just trying to knock out the opponent or merely threaten them.

Such an attack was obviously created to kill someone.

Ryner looked stunned as he gazed at the wall of the house with the large hole blown right through.

"I hope that didn't hit anyone inside."

Even while saying this, the situation continued to evolve.

Voices came from behind them.

"Sion Astal's escaped into that corner. Pursue him!"

"We'll be punished if he gets away!"

"Kill him! Kill him!"

On hearing this, Sion said,

"I'm sorry for getting you involved. It's like this. It's like this. The enemy would normally just send some thugs to come after me...looks like this isn't good. These guys look like professionals...right now, I don't have time to explain things clearly..."

Ryner stopped Sion.

"Oh well, I don't want to hear any reason. Either way, what do you intend to do? Defeat the enemy? Or continue running?"

Sion was lost in thought for a moment, and then said,

"We'll split up now! They're chasing after me. If we split up, you can save yourself."

“Ah, that’s right...I’ll feel relaxed then.”

Ryner actually answered immediately without showing any emotions, causing Sion to grimace.

“Really, at least show some concern.”

“Concern? Don’t forget, you’re the one with top grades, Sion, and I’m the straggler. Besides, don’t you want to become king? It won’t be good if you die because of something like this, right?”

On hearing this, Sion smiled.

“You’re right. See you at the academy tomorrow.”

After that, Sion ran out of the alley.

He deliberately tried to attract the enemy’s attention and shouted.

“I’M HERE! COME AFTER ME IF YOU HAVE THE GUTS!”

Once he said that, he started running off again.

A group of men who were clad in black saw Sion.

“FOUND HIM! GO AFTER HIM!!”

“KILL HIM! KILL HIM!”

And thus...

Ryner was left alone.

After checking that no one else was around, he walked out from the alley...

But even when facing this situation, he didn’t look tense at all as he yawned.

“Still have to get up early tomorrow. I’m so sleepy. Not really ready for class... might as well skip it...”

He continued off in lazy strides and went back to the hotel where everyone was drunk.

Chapter 2 A chance meeting with the beauty

Part 1

The back alley was still covered in darkness.

Sion continued to run from the killing intent that was closing in on him, desperately trying to think of a way to escape.

“What should I do? How can I get through this?”

A tense presence went through him.

He understood that it was a terrifying feeling, that once he let his guard down, he would be condemned to death.

“What should I do to overcome this?”

He seemingly moaned as he muttered to himself.

The enemy was just too strong.

He knew how strong the enemy was the moment he tried to attack.

The spell Sion cast was skillfully dodged by the enemy. In a fight between both sides, it's obvious that he couldn't match them.

However, if it was a one on one battle, Sion had the belief that he would win. That was certain.

However, there were 6 of them.

These were six highly skilled people, and based on their mobility, it was likely that they were professional assassins. People like them only needed a little interaction before reading into a person. The enemy's attacks were always coming at Sion's vitals without any mercy. Obviously, these people weren't just enemies that could be ambushed...

And they weren't enemies that could be taken down head on.

In that case, what method should he use...?

Will I be killed like this?

“If I can survive now and hang on till daylight...run...”

However, Sion's thoughts stopped here.

His feet that were running hard stopped too.

Thus,

A group of men clad in armour immediately caught up to him.

The men saw that Sion had suddenly stopped, and said in a mocking tone,

“Kuku...so you’ve finally given up?”

“Actually causing us to waste so much effort...”

“Kishishi. Then, let us send you to heaven and grant you release.”

However, even though the situation was really difficult, Sion didn't turn back to look at them.

“...”

He merely remained silent and narrowed his eyes.

“Yo, are you so scared that you don't even want to look at our faces?”

One of the men said.

At this moment, Sion finally spoke,

“I'm actually running for my own life...? Why must I run? If I really am capable of being king, the heavens wouldn't allow me to die here, right?”

At this moment, Sion turned around.

He continued with a calm tone,

“Ryner's right. If I'm capable of being king, I won't die in such a place...or rather, if I can't even deal with people...no, trash like you who follow those nobles that bare their fangs. If I can't deal with people like you cleanly...”

Sion's words were so casual, but his eyes were abnormally sharp. He bent his body low and got into battle mode completely.

On seeing this, the men didn't mind as they gave mocking sneers.

“Are you going to struggle before your death? With your ability, this is too much, handsome boy.”

The despicable laughter roared like thunder. Then, the man drew out long and sharp daggers from within their cloaks.

However, Sion didn't care about all this.

He gently exerted the force within his body.

The battle began.

With lightning-quick speed, Sion quickly closed in on the enemies and got ready to attack one of them.

At that moment,

Two men moved towards him, looking like they were trying to cut him off.

Sion knew that if he attacked one of them, the other person will use this opening and stab with the dagger.

Sion suddenly stopped and immediately and faced the swinging knife, ready for the man on the left that was attacking.

Sion grabbed that man's wrist that had the dagger in his hand, subdued him, raised his knee and smashed it hard into the man's chest.

“WAH!?”

The knee went deep into the man's chest.

This attack actually incapacitated an enemy...

Just as Sion was relieved at this, he suddenly felt a strong killing intent behind him, and shrank his body back.

But he was still an instant too late as his shoulder was slashed by the dagger.

“Ugh...”

Fresh blood came gushing out from his shoulder as a sharp pain went through his entire body. But if he stopped because of such a thing, his life would be in jeopardy.

At that moment, Sion rolled forward and pulled away from the enemy, got up

and started drawing a magic array.

If he could do so, maybe he could finish off 2 enemies...

However,

“Don't get too cocky!”

Two men threw the daggers in their hands at Sion.

At this critical moment, Sion could only stop the creation of his magic arrays. He struck out, knocked a dagger off course and grabbed the other dagger at the same time.

Now that I have a weapon...

No time to think too much.

A black-clothed man who didn't look like he had any intention of participating used this short time to complete a magic array.

Upon seeing the enemy's magic array, Sion couldn't help but groan.

That was the lightning spell 'Izuchi', the same spell Kiefer cast on Ryner during the practical lesson. However, the enemy's 'Izuchi' was far stronger than the one Kiefer cast.

If it wasn't about training but really about attacking the enemy through magic, the caster's force was also an important point. Roland's magic really had such shocking destructive powers.

If he was attacked directly, it's likely that he would be turned into ash...

The man started chanting,

“What I seek is lightning. Izuchi.”

Immediately, a bright light came from the center of the magic array...

During this time, Sion threw the dagger in his hand at the center of the magic array.

Immediately, the lightning that was gathered from the magic array let out a light, and that blinding light followed the dagger as it stabbed the shoulder of the man drawing the magic array.

“WAAA!”

The lightning struck.

The man's body couldn't withstand the powerful destructive power of the lightning, and collapsed.

After dealing with another enemy, Sion smiled.

“Now, that's two...wa!”

Before he even finished, Sion was interrupted.

Someone struck him from behind.

Sion was attacked on the back of the head, and his entire body collapsed weakly onto the floor. The hit just now caused his legs to tremble, and he couldn't stand up.

“Da, damn it!”

Sion himself was almost paralyzed as he lay on the floor. He turned around to look.

And he found that his attacker was the man he had struck in the chest, the one whom he thought was unconscious.

That man sneered and said,

“Kishishi, this isn't a kid's game, pretty boy. This is a real battlefield of murder. Don't you know that you have to deliver the final blow to you enemy?”

And then, the man picked up the dagger that fell onto the floor.

His face showed an irritating and despicable sneer as he said,

“You caused me to waste so much effort. Now let's see how I'll deal with you...”

After saying that, the man raised the knife high up—

Sion couldn't move.

His head was still concussed and his vision swaying, and his body wasn't listening to his commands.

However, his thoughts were abnormally calm.

Will I be killed? In such a place? In such a dirty back alley? Me?

Really unbelievable. The developments up till now are way too funny...

He could see the man holding the dagger and swinging it down hard.

And it was shown right in front of his eyes in slow motion.

He was calm, abnormally calm.

He could see death approaching slowly...

Slowly.

Suddenly,

A strange object came from the side and appeared in front of Sion's eyes. It was a long, thin needle-shaped object that looked like it was made of wood. That needle-shaped object pierced through the man's hand that was about to swing down.

“WAAAAAAAAAHHH!!”

The man screamed and stopped.

He looked at the hand that had the needle poked through.

“WHA, WHAT'S THIS!?”

The man roared.

A voice rang. It was the clear voice of a girl.

This voice stated casually,

“That's a dango stick. You can tell, right? Do you even need to ask?”

Her tone didn't have any emotion in it, and it was icy cold as if she was ignoring them.

Sion and the men turned to look at the source of this voice in unison.

And thus...

Everyone gasped.

The one standing in front of them was an unbelievable beauty.

She had bright blond hair and long and narrow eyes, coupled with that face

that was abnormally beautiful. Wrapped under the blueish-white robes was an amazingly slender body. For some reason, she had a sword tied at her waist.

And her hand...

Was holding two dango sticks.

She continued to put the dangos into her mouth.

As she looked way too emotionless, the dangos seemed like they were hard to swallow...

However, such an emotionless expression, shown on such a beautiful girl's face could probably go hand in hand with the phrase 'mysterious presence'.

This girl who was completely emotionless looked at the current situation, and for some reason, started to blush.

“Has the recent trend...become such that men can attack other men brazenly? How daring, isn't it?”

““““AH!?””””

Immediately, Sion and the men cried out in unison.

The tense atmosphere was relaxed quite a bit.

Thus, that man with the dango stick pierced through him got ready again and yelled,

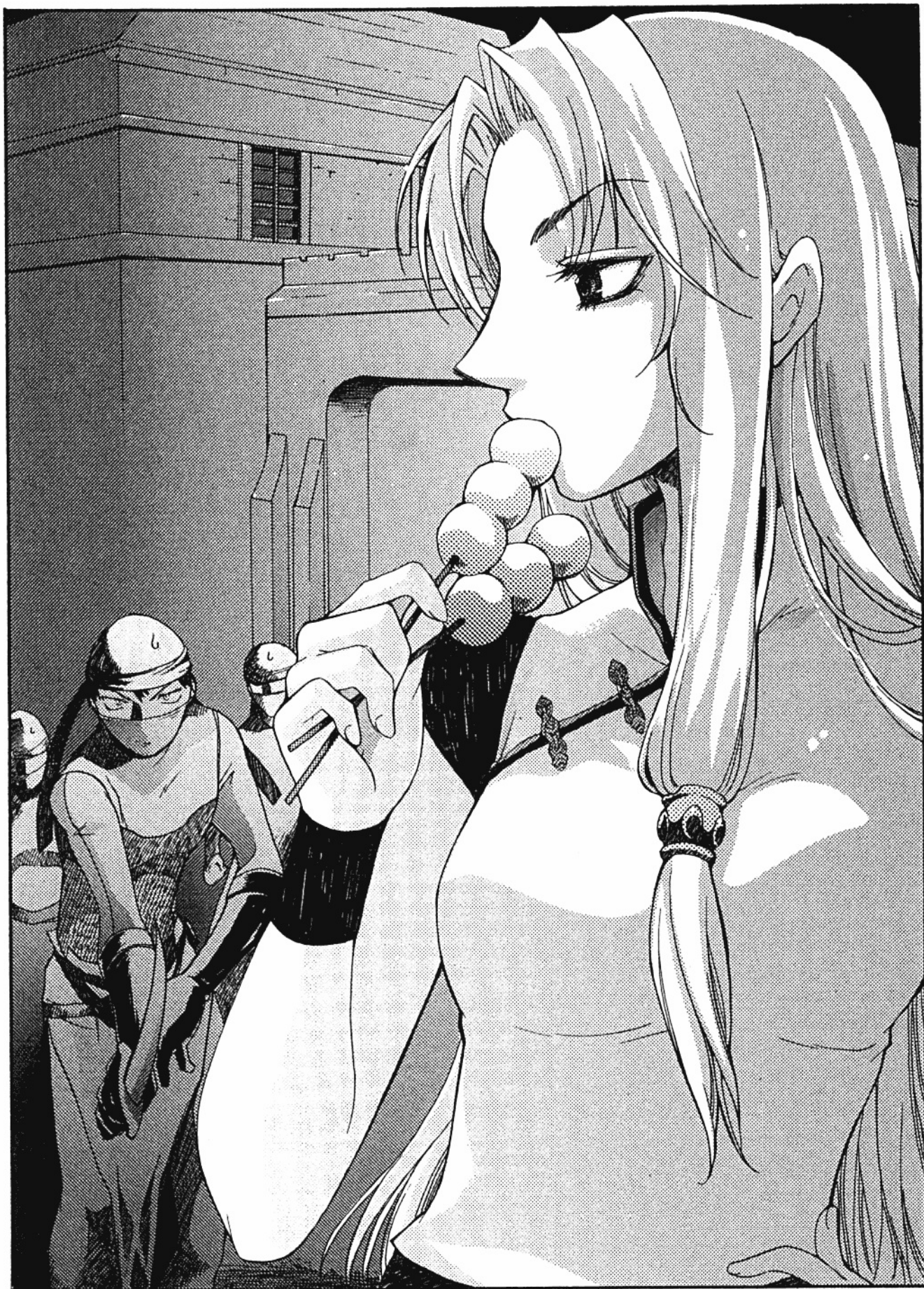
“YO, YOU THREW THIS DANGO STICK?”

On hearing this, the pretty girl just nodded her head.

“That's right. I finished that dango stick anyway.”

“THAT'S NOT WHAT I'M ASKING HERE!”

The man just looked even more agitated.



“You!? You think that you can get away with this!? Naa? Prepare yourself! Hehehehe...let’s see how we’ll deal with her, right?”

The man said to his partners, and the other men let out crude laughter as they agreed with what he said.

However, even while listening to these men’s crude words, this girl didn’t show any signs of backing away.

Not only that, she simply said.

“In that case, come at me. This lady shall take you on.”

After saying that, she drew the sword at her waist.

And still held that dango stick in her other hand...

On seeing this, the men growled.

“OI, ARE YOU LOOKING DOWN ON US!?”

“WATCH US SLAUGHTER YOU!”

Aside from the man holding down Sion, the others went to attack the girl.

On seeing this, Sion couldn’t help but shout,

“IDIOT! RUN AWAY!”

However—

At the next moment.

The woman disappeared.

No. The girl actually moved at a speed so fast it looked like she disappeared.

Immediately.

It seemed that the sword in her hand only flashed once as all 4 men were immediately incapacitated...

“Eh...?”

On seeing this, the man holding Sion down inadvertently let out a stupid sound.

Sion was also dumbstruck.

That's because he saw it,

The girl was eating her dango as she moved at unbelievable speed before smacking the vitals of the men with the side of her sword...

No, for the girl's standard, it wasn't a case of being too fast or not.

Unless one focused, it was impossible to catch her with the naked eye.

Thus—

The girl who knocked the men down in mere seconds turned around.

The blond hair was dancing in the air, and the emotionless yet beautiful eyes were looking here...

"So, are we going to continue? Sorry, it's my task to deal with crimes in this area. I won't allow such acts to happen here. If you still want to continue..."

After saying that, the girl pointed the dango stick at the man and said,

"I'll kill you."

"Hii!?"

The effect was immediate.

The man let go of Sion and left his allies behind before running away on his own.

But Sion was still stunned as he remained there.

This girl...

This girl who had easily taken down the group of 6 men who were far stronger than Sion in the blink of an eye, while eating dango and dealing with the enemies one-handed...

It was unbelievable.

Sion shouldn't be underestimated. Amongst those in the Roland Empire Royal Military Academy, he had top grades in fighting and magic...

However, this...

This girl who looked to be around 16 or 17, about the same age as Sion...

He couldn't fight against her at all.

If he had fought her as an enemy, it's likely that he would be dead immediately...

She was like a monster.

This term appeared in Sion's mind.

A beautiful and extremely fast monster.

Or...

At this moment, the still emotionless girl continued chewing on the dango, and suddenly looked at the sky before muttering.

"Un, the sky's about to turn bright."

On hearing her say that, Sion looked up at the sky as well.

The sky was really about to turn bright.

Sion looked at the sky and narrowed his eyes.

The night...was about to pass.

The night in which he was ready to die.

However...

"I'm not dead yet..."

Sion smiled.

Yes, I'm not dead. If the heavens' will was for me to die here, it means that my mission will last till here.

And the heavens sent a messenger...

He turned to look at the girl.

At this moment, the morning light broke through the clouds and shone coincidentally...

Right on her body, lighting her up.

That profile...

Wasn't a monster.

It looked like a goddess or an angel.

Part 2

Time continued to pass, and it was noon on the second day.

As usual, Ryner was sleeping.

Or rather, he slept the entire day.

On a side note to everyone, this was the classroom of the Roland Empire Royal Military Academy. Ryner was forcefully dragged by Kiefer to sit down in the classroom, but even through the 4 lessons and 3 breaks, his eyes still didn't manage to open...

No matter how much the instructors questioned, raged and were taken aback by his aloofness...he still remained himself.

Well, that's basically not the first time this happened.

Or rather, if it wasn't for Kiefer, Ryner's attendance would be almost zero.

These things weren't worth mentioning anyway.

At noon break, Ryner, who was just like a corpse and asleep, finally woke up for lunch...

He rubbed his eyes that were sleepier than usual and yawned loudly.

"Naa...muu~n, is it morning...?"

"IT'S NOON ALREADY!"

Kiefer yelled back without hesitation.

"I say, Ryner...if you're not going to work hard, you're going to be expelled by the school, you know?"

"Nn~? Is there such a thing? I'm rather outstanding here..."

"Where did that self-confidence come from...stop saying such idiotic things and eat. The bento box's rather heavy."

Kiefer said and handed the bento box over to Ryner.

“Nn.”

Ryner gave a matter of fact look as he received the bento box.

At that moment, all the boys in the class shot killer stares over...however, the sleepy person involved didn't notice this precarious situation at all.

In fact, no matter whether it was morning, afternoon or even night, once Ryner started feeling sleepy, he would even feel that eating was a chore and sometimes skipped all three meals. Thus, Kiefer had no choice but to prepare meals for him. Though it was just in name only...

Kiefer said,

“How is it? Is it good?”

Ryner said,

“Un, very good.”

Kiefer's eyes sparkled as she smiled.

“Really? That's great!”

At the same time, the other boys in the class were screaming inside their hearts:

(Must kill Ryner and dice him up!)

Everything was just as usual for a peaceful lunch break...

At this moment, Sion suddenly walked into the classroom.

As usual, he said with a cheery tone,

“Yo, you two. Your relationship's rather sweet as usual!”

He deliberately emphasized, and on hearing that, Kiefer blushed.

“Wha...what are you saying...really you, Sion. We're just friends. Yes, just friends...right Ryner?”

Up till now, Kiefer glanced at Ryner's face, but Ryner remained silent.

He was silent, and also in a zen-like phase as he closed his eyes.

No, instead of a zen phase...

“...”

He actually fell asleep.

“YOU’RE ASLEEP AGAIN!?”

“Naa!? Ah, I actually fell asleep?”

“WHAT DID YOU MEAN BY ACTUALLY FALLING ASLEEP!? AND WHILE EATING TOO! REALLY, HAVE YOU BEEN FIGHTING MUCH RECENTLY!?”

“Really? Don’t praise me like that...”

“I’M NOT PRAISING YOU AT ALL! I’M DERIDING YOU HERE!”

“Oh, so you’re deriding me?”

For some reason, Ryner actually seemed aware as he nodded his head, yawned, and finally noticed Sion.

Ryner looked at him, and said,

“Yo, you still alive?”

Sion gave wry smile.

“Don’t decide my life and death so easily. You look safe too.”

“Not really the case. It’s because of you that I was dragged to lessons first thing in the morning. I nearly died there...”

Obviously, such ridiculous words were interrupted by Kiefer as she rewarded him with a punch.

Sion chuckled as he saw this, and nodded in a satisfied manner.

“Ah, it’s good that you’re fine. Speaking of which, sorry for disturbing your time together. Looks like I should go.”

After saying that, Sion made to leave, but Kiefer hurriedly stopped him.

“Hey, I told you that we’re not like that already♥! We, we’re definitely not in that sort of relationship! Right Ryner?”

Kiefer said and turned back to look.

However, Ryner was asleep again...

Kiefer was about to raise her metal-like fist.

"I say, at least..."

But Sion stopped Kiefer's hand at this moment.

With a gentle expression, he looked at Ryner, and then turned to Kiefer before saying,

"Kiefer. Ryner didn't really sleep much last night."

"Eh? Really?"

Sion nodded his head.

"Un. Last night, because of a few trivial things, he ended up accompanying me through the entire night, so just let him sleep more, alright?"

"..."

Kiefer didn't say any more as her normally cheery expression showed a somewhat awkward look. And then...

She released her hard fist that became a soft palm before slapping right on Ryner's head.

"Eh!?"

Sion was shocked to see this.

But Kiefer didn't think much of it as she said with a steady tone.

"No matter what, he sleeps too much! I don't know what you two guys were secretly doing last night, but that means you didn't sleep, right, Sion? Why is there such a huge difference? Either way, Ryner has to man himself up!"

Kiefer was angry.

The eyes that were normally in a half-joking manner narrowed dangerously.

And for some reason, she started to look lonely.

"Really...he should have told me everything...if he said it, I would more or less...this idiot Ryner...this idiot!"

On seeing this, Sion smiled.

“Allow me to take my leave first. I will have to head somewhere first.”

“Ah, un, what about today’s meeting...?”

“I can’t attend. Just proceed on your own.”

“Got it. I’ll tell everyone.”

“I’ll leave it to you then.”

After saying that, Sion left the classroom.

Part 3

After a while,

Sion appeared at the dango shop.

The reason was,

Because the goddess forced him to buy them...

Sion recalled what happened last time, and couldn't help but give a wry smile. At that moment, Sion was stunned by the girl's otherworldly beauty, the girl who was giving off a bright light and had an ever perfect face...

Then—

The girl seemed to suddenly remember something as she looked at Sion and said to him.

Her voice was calm,

"They say that when dogs receive a favor, they'll remember it for the rest of their lives."

"Heh?"

Sion couldn't grasp the meaning behind the girl's words, and looked completely stunned as he answered that.

However, the girl didn't seem to mind as she continued,

"For example, a dog was nearly drowning in a river, and I saved it in the nick of time. What do you think will happen next?"

"...No..."

Sion didn't really understand the real meaning behind the girl's words, but he still suitably answered,

"...You want gratitude?"

On hearing this, the girl nodded.

“That’s right. Dogs will never forget about this gratitude. Every year, the dog will definitely buy me a Wynnit dango shop ‘recommended combo set 4’ from the 3rd district. Dogs really are smart. They know that once they tell the shop owner to send it to the beautiful lady of the Eris family, the item will be sent to me.”

The girl said that with a serious expression, and Sion was momentarily stunned. It was different from the shock he had when he saw the overwhelming martial arts and outstanding beauty...

However, the girl didn’t seem to mind the expression on Sion’s face as she continued to nod expressionlessly in a satisfied manner.

“That’s what I’m talking about.”

What do you mean that’s what you’re talking about!?

Just before Sion was about to ask, the girl spun and took a large step before leaving...

Just like that, Sion went to the dango shop to buy the ‘recommended combo set 4’.

He didn’t really listen to the Eris’ family address.

There was no need. On hearing this name, he immediately knew who she was and where she was from.

The Eris clan.

This family was a famous clan that was in charge of protecting the king of the Roland Empire.

It was a noble clan with extremely great power.

It was also known as the swordsmen clan.

This clan’s mission was simply to protect the king, and never to take part in battles. Thus, very few people knew its power. However...

They were extremely famous amongst some of the nobles.

Everyone knew that that clan was the strongest.

They had a large dojo inside the city, and amongst some famous nobles, heading to the Eris' clan dojo was like proof of being famous.

Only a small group of people could enter and exit the dojo, and those were nobles that were highly respected...

Sion looked up at this large stone structure that was built right in front of him, the thing that didn't look out of place with all the decorations and serenity from the buildings all around, and yet had a serious and dignified presence.

He muttered,

"I understand. This place has nothing to do with me, a third-rate noble who was born illegitimately from my parents."

For someone like him who could only be barely called nobility...

Thinking about this, Sion smiled. It was a sharp smile with many meanings, one that didn't think about his own shame, and one without any mockery, and even one with a somewhat proud stand.

He knew that he was in a delicate position. The brothers he had never met before seemed to view him, born out of a lowly woman's stomach, as a humiliation. They may have sent assassins one after another to assassinate him...

In other words...he wasn't popular. He knew that. Thus, up till now, he tried his best not to go near those noble gatherings.

There were a few reasons.

First, he had many misgivings with those who were arrogant all because of their noble standing.

Another reason was that if he joined the nobles, he wouldn't be able to get the talents that couldn't even reach the nobles.

And last of all, he didn't want them to realize his ambition...

If he stepped into the nobles' territory and had the one thing he wanted

discovered, those brothers of his would be wary of him. To him, that's not a good thing.

If they really wanted to hunt him down with all they had, he wouldn't have enough power to fight them.

Those brothers were different from him. They were born with lots of authority.

They wielded lots of power.

They were the second highest ranking in this country.

Sion and his brothers were all sons of the King of Roland...

However, from the moment Sion was born from his mother's womb, he didn't have the authority he should have. He was a child born from a lowly woman, just a child born from a King's lust on a woman as he wandered through the world.

Every time those nobles saw him, they would say,

"Son of a filthy mother dog."

His mother already had a husband, but once the king had his eyes on her, she was forcefully taken away. And once she bore Sion, she was abandoned...

In the end, Sion's mother was treated like a dirty mother dog. His mother couldn't withstand this pain and committed suicide, but still couldn't get anyone's pity. People just felt that she died like a dog, and no one went to her funeral.

Thus, he never met the king, and never met his brothers.

He felt hostility and killing intent all around from the moment he was born.

However, Sion...

Reveled in it.

Isn't this interesting? I can bet everything on this. Since you people think like this, I'll take you all down in one swoop. I'll eliminate all those that get in my way.

To achieve this aim, he needed more power.

Political power, military power. No matter how beautiful or filthy it was, he would take them all.

He needed more, more and more.

He again looked around.

The beautiful buildings that were lined side by side in blocks were located in the large city.

This was the territory of the nobles. The territory of the nobles who hated him and tried to kill him.

However, he had no need to be scared.

To get this power he needed, even if it was the territory of nobles, he had to barge into it daringly.

If he wanted to get that assistance...

Sion's mind remembered the information he investigated before he visited this place.

According to the records of nobles, that beautiful girl he met yesterday seemed to be called Ferris Eris.

"Ferris...Ferris..."

She was a noble.

However, Sion wanted to recruit her. He had never seen such a beautiful being.

Right now, the gates were right in front of him.

The gates to the Eris' residence.

This was the residence of the clan that never appeared on the public stage, one filled with mystery, a famed clan hailed as the strongest swordsmen clan.

What kind of shocking situation awaits him...?

Sion knocked on the door without hesitation.

"I have a present for Miss Ferris Eris."

And thus,

Without any warning from the inside, the gates opened silently.

A long road reached out from within the gates, and the wide garden was neatly trimmed on both sides.

It was an ordinary garden.

For a noble's residence, this place was a little too humble. However, it wasn't really that much different from an ordinary noble's residence.

Even so...

Sion's face tensed.

For some reason, inside the gates...

He seemed to feel a heavy, dark and deep darkness inside.

Sion was led to a dojo that was so large that the opposite wall couldn't be seen.

The dojo was completely empty. There was no sound from such a large place, unknowingly forming a serious atmosphere. The entire dojo was tiled with wooden blocks, and there wasn't a speck of dust around.

The old butler who was in charge of serving the guest led him to the entrance of the dojo.

"Please remove your shoes in the dojo. Then, if I may..."

The old butler looked like he was about to leave, and Sion hurriedly stopped him.

"Ah, I see. I want to see Miss Ferris, but there doesn't seem to be anyone around...what should I do?"

The old butler looked at Sion, and then said,

"Mr Sion Astal. In the Eris residence, a first-time visitor has to meet the master. This is the rule, even for Master Eris' friends...thus, please enter the dojo."

"Eh...? But, there didn't seem to be anyone..."

Before Sion even finished, he immediately shut up. He suddenly felt a strong

and large presence coming from inside...

“Ah...!?”

This presence was different from any presence Sion felt before.

The killing aura of a beast.

He didn't just feel this. That overwhelming pressure may be better described as a demonic killing aura.

It's really hard to imagine that it was the presence of a human.

However, amidst all this, there was a serenity that felt like it could vanish when the wind blows, and an icy feeling that could see through everything...

Sion was confused. He cringed, and didn't have the courage to look inside the dojo...

Wha, what resides inside...?

At this moment,

The old butler said,

“It's my master, the older brother of Miss Ferris.”

Sion looked up. A man was sitting inside the dojo properly from who knows when. But there was definitely no one inside just now...

No...

Sion was ever clear about this.

This person was there right from the beginning. It was just that Sion himself couldn't see it. This man didn't want to be seen, so Sion couldn't see him.

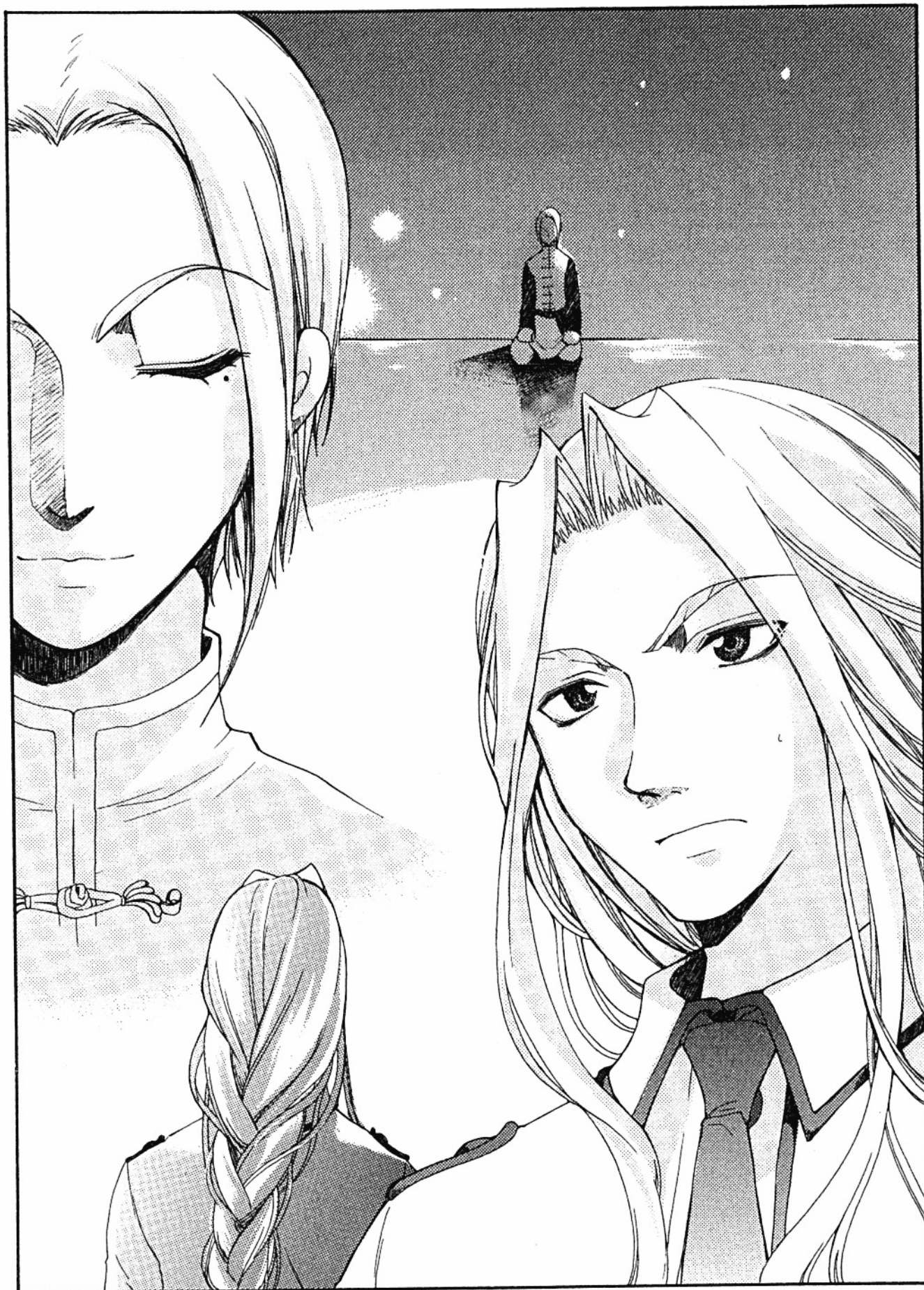
To the master of the Eris clan, was it really such a simple thing to go to this extent? Covering one's own presence and not being in other people's consciousness...

“Ku...”

Sion felt icy cold sweat flow down his back.

He looked at the man who was sitting silently in front of him...

He had blond hair that was like Ferris, but it was not long. The steadily closed eyes were coupled with an unbelievably good looking face. This man was also dressed in a blue and white robe.



The presence around him was ever so calm.

He looked to be a little older than Sion...probably about 20.

To an untrained person, he may look like a calm good youth.

However, this person...

At this moment, this man said in a clear voice that would definitely rile the other party's anxiety,

"I'm sorry for taking a little while. I'm the master of the current Eris family, Lucile. You're...Ferris' friend, right? Nn. Looks like you bought a gift. I'm sure Ferris will be happy."

Sion hurriedly changed his posture and answered,

"Ah, yes. We're not friends, but Miss Ferris helped me out last night...I'm Sion Astal."

"Helped you out? Ah, looks like Ferris did accomplish her task."

"Task?"

Sion couldn't help but ask upon hearing that. He suddenly remembered that Ferris seemed to have said something similar before...

He remembered that she said something similar—

"Sorry, it's my task to deal with crimes in this area. I won't allow such acts to happen here."

Sion asked in an inquisitive manner,

"What does that mean?"

Lucile answered,

"Nothing. I just felt that the child was a little too free recently, so I gave an order to her that she will have to reduce the crimes of damage or violence to zero during a specific time."

"Ze...zero...?"

Sion asked in surprise. Lucile nodded, and said,

“For me, Sion, it’s a little different in order, but I have to say it to you now. Welcome to the Eris residence. You’re an interesting person. Very good, I understand. We’ll welcome you here. I’ll allow you to see Ferris.”

“Eh? Interesting? Erm, I don’t really understand what you mean. Do you mean that I’m accepted...?”

On hearing this, Lucile smiled.

And then, while keeping that smile...

Killing intent suddenly exploded from Lucile’s body.

Right at Sion.

“Kuu...”

Such shocking pressure. It felt like he would be killed by the other party’s spiritual pressure the moment he relaxed. Sion’s knees nearly weakened, and he spent a lot of effort before barely hanging on.

He couldn’t move. No, he couldn’t even lift a finger. He would die the moment he moved.

He will be killed, definitely...

Lucile continued to keep his eyes closed and he smiled and said to Sion,

“Ho...I said it, didn’t I. you’re really an interesting person. Haven’t you realized what expression you were showing?”

Sion stared at Lucile and groaned.

“Wha, what do you mean?”

Sion’s tone went back to normal. No, it could most probably be said that his true nature was lured out...

And in a rather easy fashion too.

Lucile continued to talk as he looked rather happy.

“You were smiling at me. You knew that if I wanted to, before you even found me...I could have killed you. But you were smiling at me. Weren’t you scared? No, you’re really scared of me. You’re scared of such overwhelming presence of

death. However, your heart had a feeling that exceeded that fear. What is it? What is that feeling..."

For an instant, Lucile seemed to stop pondering, and then he continued,

"Ah, I see? You want me. No, you want everything. Your eyes are telling me all your thoughts. You want this country's..."

"You..."

Sion couldn't help but widen his eyes. All his thoughts were read through.

How capable was this guy...

But if he was really seen through, he'll definitely be dead!

The Eris clan always acted as guards for the king.

Sion's entire body trembled. That's because he was facing that overwhelming power of death.

He was facing that ominous pressure.

At this moment, Lucile stood up, and his face still had that smile that seemed stuck on his face.

It was really scary. The overwhelming difference in ability between both of them caused Sion to tremble in fear and remain unable to move.

Lucile slowly and surely walked to him.

He said,

"No. You want an even distant future. A future that's far, far away. You're really an interesting person. Should I kill you now? Or let you live? What should I choose? To kill or not to kill? The decision's completely in my hands...ha, hahaha, ha!"

He smiled. He always had that smile on his face.

Sion couldn't move at all.

A hand reached out. For a man, that hand was rather slender and extravagant.

The god of death resided in his hand.

That hand was gently stroking Sion's neck, raising his chin...

At this moment,

"Oi."

A familiar, unrestrained and clear voice rang.

"What do you want to do to my dangos?"

One could tell who it was from the tone. It was Ferris.

Immediately, the smile that was on Lucile's face disappeared, and he turned to look at Ferris.

"Ferris, this Sion who you saved yesterday brought dango over."

"I know. But what I want to ask is what were you trying to do, brother?"

"Fmm, men have a lot of secrets between each other. Do you really want to know, Ferris?"

"You...be, between men...?"

For some reason, Ferris' bewitching face immediately went red the moment she heard this. She said,

"...I won't ask anymore for now."

"OI! ARE YOU MISTAKING SOMETHING HERE!!?"

At this moment, Sion was finally released from the tense curse. The killing aura from Lucile's body vanished without a trace as if it never existed at all. Other than the neck Lucile was grabbing, Sion's entire body was covered in cold sweat.

In a completely different tone, Lucile said to Sion in a somewhat calm manner, right in the ears in a whispering-like manner, "You survived. That shows your power, right? I won't do anything to you. You can build your relationship with Ferris now. Don't see her as she is now. She's a rather lonely person, probably because our parents died early."

After saying these words, Lucile turned to Ferris,

"Ferris, looks like you really completed your task. Now you can proceed to the

next task. What do you think?”

Ferris said,

“Brother. I have this feeling recently that you have been using your own interests under the namesake of tasks and dumping them onto me...”

“My sister, what are you saying? Isn’t this the training passed down for generations in the Eris’ clan? Don’t you believe me?”

“...What will you do if I say that I don’t?”

“You’ll die.”

“ ...”

It was a clear cut answer as Lucile actually said such merciless things so brazenly.

Ferris remained emotionless as she looked at her brother.

“You’re saying this seriously, right?”

“I’m always serious.”

“.....Then, what’s the next task?”

Then, Lucile pointed at Sion,

“From now on, you’re going to be the assistant of Sion here. I believe that if you remain with him, you’ll get quite a lot of chances to train.”

Lucile suddenly said such words, and Sion couldn’t help but look at him.

“Ah? This is a little too...”

“What? Is there anything you’re unhappy about?”

“No, that’s not what I meant....”

Sion wasn’t being unhappy, but also hoped for this outcome. He already wanted to get Ferris in his group. In that case, though he could get Ferris’ help easily...

What will Ferris think?

Sion continued to look at the emotionless Ferris.

She stared at Sion with those beautiful eyes, sighed, and said,
“I won’t dare to disobey you.”

Thus, Ferris joined Sion’s ranks of comrades...

Part 4

After a while...

Sion was brought alone to the garden.

The moment Lucile said that he was going to meditate, the scary thing was that he disappeared, and Ferris looked like she wasn't shocked by this at all as she said, "I'll have the old uncle bring you to the garden. I'll be there soon."

And thus, Sion arrived at this garden and was sitting on the long bench of the garden.

He looked around.

The garden was trimmed and properly taken care off.

The trees basked completely under the warm sunlight, and that same sunlight landed on Sion. The flow of water and the chirping of birds that came from somewhere seemed to make him feel comfortable.

If this kept up, he might fall asleep.

That's what he thought.

Was it because of a lack of sleep? Or was it because of that monstrous presence of Lucile? Sion just felt tired.

He looked up at the sky and closed his eyes to rest for a while.

However—

"Are you the one who hid the dango and bullied sister? Stop hiding it and hand it over, or else I won't care about the consequences!"

Someone suddenly growled at him. Sion hurriedly got up.

And looked at where the voice came from.

He saw a girl that was about 6, 7 years old, held by the hand by Ferris and

looking back at him.

The girl was wearing a dress with lots of frills on the side. She had beautiful blond hair and a nice face that looked like she too would become a beauty in the future.

She had a really childish presence, but one could tell...

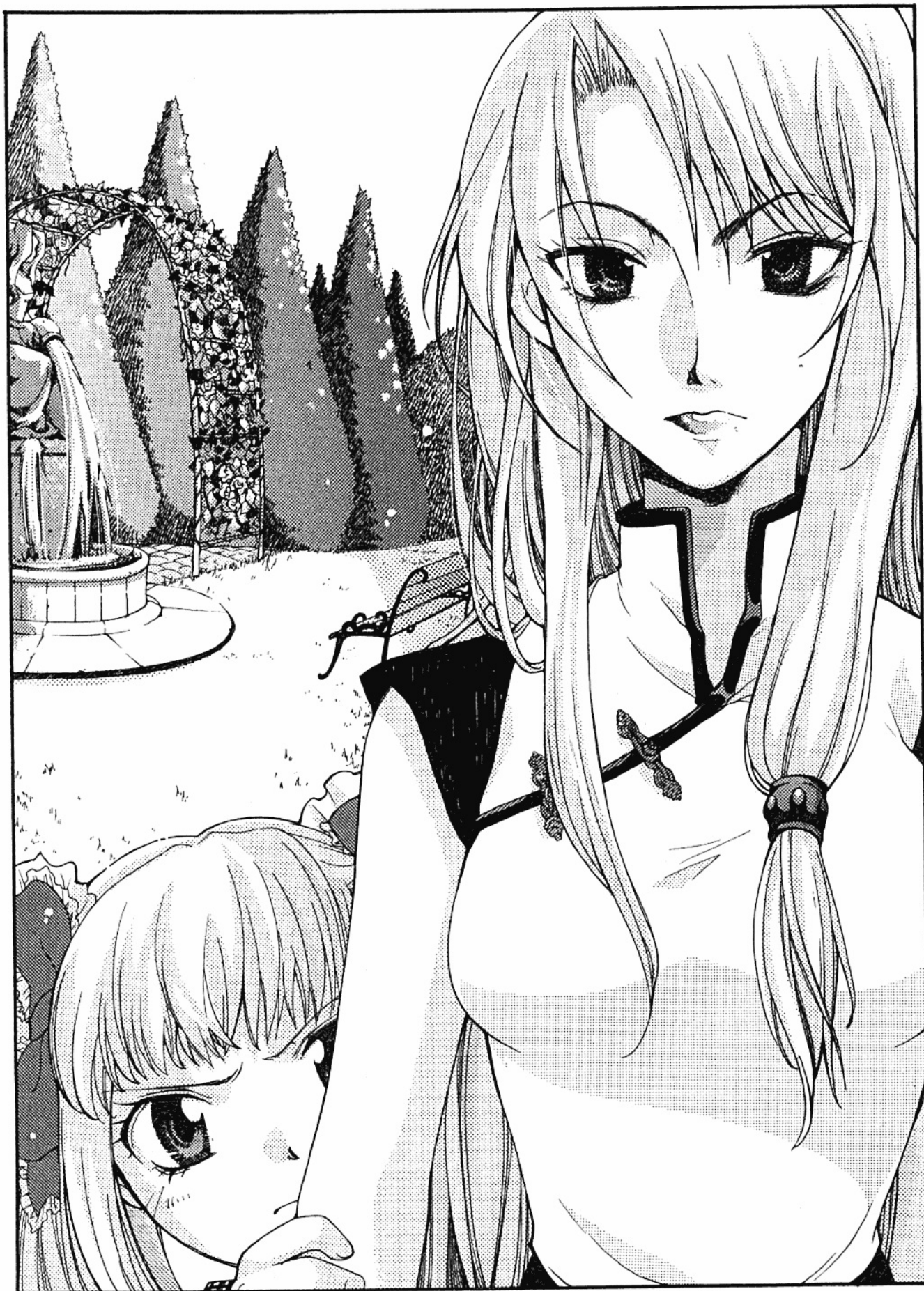
This girl should be Ferris' little sister or some relative? In that case, the sister she was talking about should be Ferris, and what she just said...

Sion gave a wry smile.

"Bully you? Who'll be so daring?"

Ferris ignored him.

"See that, Iris? You see that malicious face? He ate so much that I didn't have any, and even looks all innocent at that. You cannot be like such an evil adult in the future."



“I see it, I see it. Iris knows that he hid the dango. That guy’s holding the box from the dango shop, right? Sister? Iris knows everything.”

“Iris’ really amazing. That’s right. That guy snatched my dango and even threatened me, saying that if I wanted to eat dango, I have to help him. What do you think?”

“HE’S THE WORST!”

“That’s right. He’s the worst. What should he do when he wants to ask others for help?”

“Wynnit dango shop! Even a dog knows how to buy it!”

Iris answered without hesitation.

Ferris still looked emotionless, but seemed to be satisfied as she nodded her head.

“How about it, Sion? Even a child knows that. Now, what do you think you should do?”

Having been clobbered by their partnership for a while, Sion sighed.

“I’ll just get a combo set, alright?”

Ferris however shook her head.

“Two boxes. Who asked you to get me to accompany you to do such messy things alone? It’s really too troublesome. Iris will help too. Basically, the problem you’re facing is those attackers, right? There won’t be enough people if I have to track or set up something alone. So Iris, are you willing to help me out?”

“Un! I’ll help too. God will be angry and break my limbs if I don’t listen to sister, right?”

Sion looked at Iris, who was smiling and giving a radiant smile as she said such ridiculous words, and couldn’t help but shrug, “Wait, don’t be too hasty. I’ll get the combo sets alright, but are you really going to get the little girl to help?”

“Hm? You have a problem?”

“What I’m saying is that there’re a lot of problems normally, right? First, it’s

dangerous for her to take part.”

“Dangerous?...Fmm.”

Ferris nodded her head, and after pondering silently, she put her hand on Iris’ head. She said to Iris, who was playing with her hand, “Iris, that peevish brother’s looking down on you.”

“Ah! Really? Why?”

“He said that you’re a brat who hasn’t gotten rid of your habit of wetting the bed.”

Immediately, Iris’ face went completely white.

“No way! Ho, hooooooooowwww does he know about this!?”

“That’s because bad people love to grab people on their weaknesses the most. Speaking of which, Iris, what do you want to do? What will you do when your secret’s known?”

Immediately—

Iris’ face became heinous.

She glared at Sion viciously.

“If my secret’s known...I’ll kill them all.”

“That’s right. Go!”

“Un!”

Immediately.

Iris charged at Sion with lightning quick speed.

“Wai...”

Before Sion could even finish speaking,

He flipped up, trying to find a way to dodge the super-humanly fast child closing in as she swung a spinning kick over with her small leg. He then blocked the punches that were coming like rapids. Sion then jumped back and pulled his distance from Iris before looking at her.

Right in front of his eyes, he saw Iris, moving quickly with such agile reflexes

for a small child.

“No way...”

Sion seemed to groan.

Ferris said in a casual tone to him,

“How is it? It seemed that Iris can already launch close ranged attacks on you just by relying on body techniques. Do you still think that she can’t help?”

Sion immediately shook his head.

“I admit defeat. So can Iris please help us out?”

“Un. Iris, stop fighting. This brother finally seems to recognize you as a mature adult.”

“Eh? Really? Iris really, never wet her bed, you know?”

Sion gave a stupid smile and nodded his head.

“I know that. Iris’ an adult already, right?”

Iris again gave a bright smile.

“Un!”

She nodded her head hard.

In contrast, Sion couldn’t help but sigh.

This little girl that was still immature and cute and adorable actually launched a spinning kick that would have broken his neck if she landed the kick.

He was really impressed.

The direction he was heading in wasn’t going to be won through battles. He had to get powerful backing instead of fighting a direct battle with a strong enemy.

“Well, I sort of knew this...then, including Miss Iris, may I introduce myself? Since I’ll be working with you two, allow me to introduce a little of myself to you two...”

Thus, Sion started his explanation.

Part 5

He was born of a certain famous noble family, but illegitimately.

Amongst those few brothers or even sisters that he hadn't met before, one may be trying to kill him.

First, was to investigate who the enemy was.

He never said everything out. No, he couldn't. They're the Eris clan. It had been said a few times that the Eris clan was the one in charge of protecting the king. How could he state his origin to such people, and even say that he was in dispute with his brothers...the king's children?

Even though Sion himself was a king's son...

No, there was no need for him to say it.

Besides, the ones who sent assassins to kill Sion wouldn't be those brothers. Those brothers probably wouldn't do such a thing? They would never stain their own hands.

Perhaps the one who directly hired the assassins were the nobles who were instigated by those brothers...

"First, if we can find where those people are..."

Once Sion explained this, Ferris continued to remain expressionless as she used her left hand to play with Iris, who was clinging onto her tightly.

"Then, you want us to investigate this?"

"Can you?"

"Un. This is really tough. First, there's too little information. This Sion who's pursuing a secret perversion wouldn't even tell us the names of those nobles, and just said that he wanted us to look for the people mindlessly. It's impossible. But...if I don't do this, I'll be killed by my brother...in that case..."

Ferris nodded her head.

“We’ll start watching you from tomorrow onwards. Once there are suspicious people around, we’ll follow them and find out who they are. Iris will be in charge of watching. From tomorrow onwards, you’ll be watched by Iris, no matter whether it’s morning, afternoon or night, including when you go to the toilet, when you bath and when you sleep...fm. This mission is a good chance for Iris to learn. She can understand how men are like beasts...and will despair in men so much that she’ll be my eternal slave. Fufufu.”

It’s unknown whether Ferris was saying this jokingly or seriously as she was always looking so emotionless...but Iris said to Ferris, who said such words without changing expressions, “Sister, this slave is the most obedient child, right? Iris knows that. Iris’ sister’s slave!”

Iris was still a child after all as what she said sounded so adorable.

Seeing this pair of sisters, Sion couldn’t help but give a wry smile.

“Then, how about we test this out for now?”

And thus, the plan started to proceed.

Chapter 3 Peace that tells of the end

Part 1

"I say, Ryner."

"Na~?"

"Don't you feel that Sion's been looking down recently?"

"Really? I hardly see him anyway. Don't really feel anything."

"Really, you. Don't we always meet in the class gathering?"

"In fact, I've always kept it a secret...I'll tell you then. I'm always sleeping during the gathering..."

"Do you even need to say that? Is that even a secret? You are always sleeping all day! Anyway, now isn't the time to argue about this. In any case, he looks really upset. Does Sion have something on his mind which he cannot talk about?"

"Who knows?"

"Oi, our comrade's troubled here, you know? Can't you show a little more concern?"

"Un~this is his problem, and we can't just interfere like that."

"Eh? Ah, what you said...is true..."

"If someone's troubled and decides to ask for help in the name of 'friendship between men', it'll be really troubling, make me want to sleep, and make me feel lazy."

"Eh? Those are your true thoughts!? I've had enough. I thought you finally said something nice. Even if it was for that moment, it was really touching, you know! I was such a big fool!"

Ryner and Kiefer were talking like this as they entered the narrow classroom assigned to every class.

Both of them continued arguing as they piled into the cramped room that was already packed with the other six students in the class, completely oblivious to the fact that the one they were discussing, Sion himself was in this room...

On hearing their conversation, Sion couldn't help but give a wry smile.

“Really? Do I really look that bad now?”

He asked Tai, Tony and Fualu, who were sitting around him.

The trio all nodded their heads in unison.

Tai said, “What's with you, Sion? Is there really something bothering you?”

Then, Tony said, “If we can help solve the problem, why don't you raise it for everyone to discuss so that at least we don't have to guess?”

Finally, Fualu faced him with a mysterious shine in her eyes,

“Yeah! Are your troubles emotional? Is it about romance? Is it?”

And somewhere a little further off.

“Oi! Kiefer! Why are you hitting me all of a sudden!?”

“What? So you aren't interested in how a guy looks because you're only looking at girls, right?”

“When did I ever say that! Speaking of which, you're the one who looks at guys' facial expressions because you like the...OW!? IT HURTS! MY NECK'S ABOUT TO SNAP! I LOSE, I LOSE. SPARE ME...AHH!!!”

Sion decided to ignore this old couple-like squabble as he turned back to face Tai and the rest.

“It's nothing, just a little lack of sleep recently. During this past month or so, I seem to have slept very little...but such days are about to end. Everyone, you don't have to worry...”

Before Sion even finished talking, Fualu interrupted his words.

“You have a girlfriend, right? You’ve got a girlfriend, right? That's why you lack sleep, right?”

Is this girl only thinking about boy-girl relationships all the time...?

For some reason, Tai's expression immediately became a little heinous.

“No way, Sion! You really hid it from us and took a first step? What should we do, Tony?”

“Unforgivable. Traitors must die!”

Tony started to swing his fist.

The conversation here didn't seem really constructive.

Sion seemed to be terribly mistaken, and danger was right in front of him.

But actually, such a situation wasn't surprising...

“Ahaha! No! Actually, there's something. But it looks like I really made everyone worry. Was I really looking that bad? Let me go wash my face first.”

Before he could be 'killed', Sion randomly raised a reason and left.

He first washed his face at the sink outside the room to wash away the sleepy feeling.

“Fu. Speaking of which, if I can't get to sleep these days, I might not be able to hang on...”

Sion muttered to himself as he thought of what happened recently every night, and sighed.

Ever since that night, he couldn't get to sleep at all...

Part 2

That night, Sion was researching in the library until midnight, and after he returned to the single-room in the dormitory, he collapsed onto the bed.

Just as he was about to enter dreamland, suddenly...

DON!

A sound came from the ceiling of the room, and it sounded like something was rumbling.

That sound was extremely loud, and it was different from the sound of wood rubbing together due to expansion and contraction caused by temperature differences.

However...

There was definitely a hidden presence up there. Sion got ready to fight.

What is it? Is someone there? He didn't feel anyone's presence when he entered the room at all...

Was it an assassin again?

"Damn it!"

Sion couldn't help but moan.

The assassin that came this time was really skilled. Even in such a cramped room, he could hide his own presence, and the target couldn't detect the presence at all.

He was tougher than the assassins before.

In a one on one situation, the previous assassins wouldn't be able to do anything to Sion. However, the enemy this time was...

And this time, he actually launched an attack in the academy.

Did the enemy not care about what other people would say?

“Bring it on then.”

Now that it came to this, Sion smiled. He tensed his nerves and got ready to fight.

At this moment, the embedded wooden ceiling actually loosened.

A girl suddenly peeped her head out from there.

That girl said with a lively voice,

“Jyan~! It's Iris!”

“...”

Sion was immediately speechless. He remained stunned for a while, and just felt completely weak.

“Eh...so it's Iris? Since you can hide your presence entirely, I guess you can handle enemies, easily?”

Due to the instinctive response to fight back, Sion immediately felt completely tired as he sat on the bed again and grumbled.

However, Iris didn't care about his response at all as she remained upside-down from the ceiling as she poked out that face of hers that was smiling brightly.

“I say, big brother, I can't sleep. It's night time, night time. Hurry hurry! Iris is looking forward to it!”

“Ah? What are you saying?”

Sion couldn't understand as he asked back. It was already late at night, but Iris continued to keep her bright eyes open, “Iris knows, you know? Won't big brother become a monster when it's night time? Sister said it. Show it to me. Beastie, beastie!”

“.....Beast...”

That night, Sion spent a long time trying to let Iris understand that a human male will never change into a beast as he ran through the wilderness for his own life. Both of them continued on like this until dawn...

Part 3

And on the second day,

DON!

As Sion returned back to the dormitory, the ceiling suddenly...or rather, still continued to make noises. The wooden boards on the ceiling were slowly being loosened as an extremely emotionless face poked out from the ceiling in the middle of the night, looking in.

“Looks like you didn't show your true nature last night. The plan was that if that perverted urge of yours showed and you become a beast before trying to attack Iris, I would immediately rush out from the bottom of the bed and kill you.”

“Eh? You were hiding under my bed last night!?”

“Only for 5 minutes. Well, get to sleep. Now's the time to eat the dango I bought for supper. I don't have time to waste on you.”

After saying that, Ferris quickly returned back into the ceiling, and the wooden board that was loosened reverted to normal.

And two eyeballs that showed no emotion at all were looking through the gaps at Sion.

Occasionally, he would hear the sounds of someone eating dango.

“.....How do you expect me to sleep...”

Part 4

And another day passed.

“Jyan! Iris' here!”

It's been a week since things had been like this. Sion was starting to worry whether he would die due to sleep deprivation before being killed by his enemies.

Even though Sion had this doubt, habit was really a scary thing. Recently, Sion managed to gain an ability, once Iris finished talking with him, he would use the remaining few hours till daylight to get the necessary sleep.

Even though he knew that this wasn't good for him in the long term...

Part 5

Let's not talk about this now.

After washing his face, Sion used the cloth to wipe the water off and muttered,

“Speaking of which, I can finally get a good night's sleep today...”

Ferris and Iris had been looking for movements around Sion for close to a month. Just yesterday, Iris finally found someone suspicious who was tailing Sion in the middle of the night.

Right now, Ferris and Iris started following that suspicious person. The enemy may be on high alert, as up till now, they were unable to get in touch with the mastermind. However, that was only a matter of time.

So I finally got them.

Sion's eyes let out a sharp glint as he narrowed his eyes. What were in his eyes were ambition, hatred, and a strong and powerful will.

He smiled.

“From today on, I won't run. I want to rise up here. Anyone who gets in my way, no matter who it is...I will eliminate them without mercy...”

At this moment, a scream suddenly rang as if it was deliberately timed. It interrupted his thoughts.

“ARGH!! I'M—ABOUT—TO—BE—KILLED!!”

It was Ryner's voice.

Sion looked back fearfully, and saw that Ryner had his upper body poking out from the back door of the room and had a way too calm expression for that screaming plea for help, “I-I'M GOING TO BE KILLED BY KIEFER! SION, SAVE ME!”

On seeing this, Sion gave a wry smile. He looked at Ryner and Kiefer, who was all over Ryner, shouting 'WHO LIKES GUYS!' as she continued to strangle Ryner.

“You two have quite the good relationship~ just like an old couple.”

“Eh!?”

Immediately, Kiefer's face went red.

“Wha, what are you saying, Sion? We're not a couple! If you say that...I'll be embarrassed, you know? Right, Ryner?”

Though Kiefer said that, she seemed to be overly happy as she continued to make a ruckus and strangle Ryner tightly.

Such a reason really couldn't be hidden from bystanders' eyes.

Sion couldn't help but laugh.

As for Ryner,

“Uuu.”

He was foaming at the mouth and seemed to be losing consciousness. However, this wasn't out of the ordinary, so it shouldn't be something too troubling, right?

Unknowingly, all the people were gathered outside.

“DO YOUR BEST!”

Someone roared.

“LET HIM PASS OUT!”

Someone stirred things up.

Sion looked at this group of comrades.

The scene in front of him really looked relaxed and satisfying, and one really couldn't feel any malice, traps, killing intent or hatred in them.

There's no war, no death...

Just peace.

An ordinary everyday life...

So ordinary one would be depressed by this.

Recently, whenever he saw such a scene, Sion would always remember something.

His ambition and plan for revenge might just be something completely meaningless...

His dream to take revenge on the parents and brothers who abused him and take the throne.

It was a dream that would sacrifice a lot of lives.

This dream...

Was there really a need?

Didn't he have everything now?

Laughing with friends, quarreling with them, and patching things up.

Other than that, what more could one ask for?

If there's peace now...

Wouldn't his desire to take revenge on his brothers or take the throne to change this country become unnecessary?

Sion looked at his friends, and then looked at the sky.

"My goal..."

Suddenly someone burst into the room.

"Mr. Sion!?"

Several of Sion's allies who were drafted to other classes looked absolutely horrified as they ran over.

"MR. SION! MR. SION! THIS IS BAD! IT'S OVER! IT'S ALL OVER!"

Ryner and Kiefer, who were making quite the ruckus, quietened down due to the overwhelming fear.

Actually, that wasn't really the case. Ryner was just foaming at the mouth as he went limp.

Let's not talk about that for now...

Sion turned to face his allies who ran here, and said in a very calm tone to try calming his overly agitated allies, "Calm down, Rolle. What happened?"

However, Rolle still couldn't calm his intense emotions down. Not only that, the few allies who came with Rolle were yelling.

"SION, WHAT SHOULD WE DO!?"

"WE...WE MAY BE DEAD!!"

"WHY!? WHY DID IT BECOME LIKE THIS!?"

Everyone started chatting away, casting terrified glances at each other. Sion couldn't grasp the actual situation at all.

"QUIET!"

Sion suddenly roared.

"..."

The entire place fell silent immediately.

Sion remained silent. Actually, he was hoping for this silence to cool his agitated allies.

Sion looked around at them, and then nodded.

"Then, you're to speak, Rolle. Everyone else is to remain quiet. What happened?"

His tone wasn't the usual good youth tone, but his normal tone.

Perhaps gripped by his presence, Rolle said with a trembling voice.

"It's like this...our neighbor Estabul invaded Roland. War is about to start. War...Mr. Sion, what should we do? In that case, we have to fight in a war..."

"HOW DID THIS HAPPEN!?"

Fualu cried out in agony.

Tai and Tony looked extremely pale too.

Kiefer remained silent as she grabbed hard on Ryner's collar while he was still

unconscious.

Everyone was really shocked by this.

Speaking of which, it couldn't be helped.

It's happening again.

The king of this country was about to start a war that will never see an end...

Sion closed his eyes.

He knew now. This country itself didn't have any peace. The inept king was leading the country down the withered road.

In that case...

In that case, I'll become king! No matter who I kill, no matter how many I sacrifice...

As Sion widened his eyes again, Ryner was already awake since who knew when. No, maybe he was awake the entire time.

That's because, even though Ryner's eyes still didn't look like they had any fight, what was reflected in his eyes...

Was an emptiness that Sion had never seen before.

Part 6

The war was beginning.

And the reason was simple.

The kingdom of Estabul invaded Roland territory.

That was the reason for war.

No, that was just the forefront.

In fact, during this period, Estabul had too much rain, causing the rivers to flood, and right now, they were having a shortage in goods.

The king of Roland wanted to use this chance to eliminate all of Estabul in one go.

Besides, Estabul wanted to use this chance when Roland attacks to ease their food shortage.

Both sides never thought of working together in this time of crisis...

War began again.

The war started just like this...

Part 7

It was silent all around. Normally, during this time, even if he wanted to sleep, the noise of the students on the corridor wouldn't allow him to do so...

Ryner blankly stared at the ceiling, trying to think of something,

It was amazingly quiet today.

"Uu, is this it?"

In this unnatural silence, Ryner muttered to himself.

Right now, the place he was at was an empty room that didn't have anything other than a bed. No, it might not be enough to call it empty.

Ryner did feel that it was a hassle to buy furniture, and thus there wasn't anything inside. But for some reason, whenever Kiefer came, she would leave some random stuff, and all these ended up filling the entire room. Instead of calling it empty, it would be more appropriate to call it 'messy'.

Besides, Ryner had never thought of cleaning his room before...

Ryner stared blankly at the ceiling, seemingly thinking about something, but just felt that it was troublesome.

"Let's just sleep..."

He decided to take a nap first.

Yes. There's nothing he could do about this. Unlike Sion, he wasn't intending on changing the entire country. Basically, he never thought of what he should be thinking about, what he should be saving. He never even thought about dealing with such troublesome things.

Besides...

This world was already filled with death ever since he was born.

He had never intended to change the current situation.

Ryner closed his eyes.

“A~ah how troublesome...really, isn't everyone too pumped up or something? Which idiot thought of taking other people's country? Isn't a nap good enough?”

He muttered to himself alone.

At this moment,

“You're right...”

Kiefer's voice rang from the door.

But to Ryner, in a certain sense, he wasn't surprised that Kiefer appeared as the term 'fight' completely died out in his personality.

Kiefer said,

“...I say Ryner.”

“Hm?”

“...You're really amazing, Ryner. How are you always so calm? Aren't you scared? In this current situation, we will definitely be headed for war, you know? We may die on the battlefield, but why are you so calm?”

“...”

He half-opened his eyes that were sleepy and looked at Kiefer.

Kiefer felt scared, and she was trembling in fear.

That was to be completely expected. The training before was carried out under simulated environments. Of course, simulations are just simulations, and it was different from reality.

Death had arrived beside them. The 7 years without war was a rather long time.

The peaceful 7 years were rather long.

Kiefer continued.

“I say, Ryner. If you're scared, just say it! If you're tired, just say that you're

tired. Isn't this alright? Why do you look so uninvolved? I'm always...always alone..."

Kiefer suddenly started crying in front of Ryner.

"I'm scared. I'm scared of the battlefield. I'm scared of people dying...but what I'm most scared of..."

Saying till here, Kiefer stopped and took a deep breath. She showed a little hesitation, and then said,

"I'm most afraid of Ryner dying..."

Immediately, the room went silent.

The silence remained like this.

Right now...

Even the thick-headed Ryner could hear the difference in pitch. She was so scared, scared of war, and yet...worried about that Ryner.

Even so,

Even to her sincere feelings, Ryner remained silent and didn't answer.

No. He couldn't answer.

He never had the right to answer. Ever since he was born, he never had the right to answer.

Because his eyes...

"..."

His eyes made a mark on him...

At this moment, Kiefer suddenly panicked.

"Ah, no, that's not what I meant. Un, that...it's not like that. I'm saying that since you have the worst grades, Ryner, you'll die earlier than someone like me on the battlefield...so...so I hope you can escape. My only hope is that you can run away, Ryner. Your grades aren't good, so the academy will definitely allow you to rest. It's a little hard for me...right? So..."

But at this moment, while Ryner still had a pair of sleep eyes and a limp face.

“Haa...really...you worry too much, Kiefer. I won’t die. I don’t intend to die. Death seemed painful, right? I’ll say no to death then. I don’t want to suffer.”

At this moment, a voice rang.

“Nicely put. It’s laughable about whether we die or not. We’ll definitely not die in this war. Kiefer, Ryner and my allies, we won’t die.”

The voice came from behind Kiefer.

“I’ve made arrangements. My allies are all drafted into the same squadron, and our squadron’s designated to be at a boundary area where it’s highly unlikely that we’ll be involved in war.”

It was Sion.

As Sion walked into Ryner’s room, Tai, Tony and Fualu followed him from behind.

Tai regained his usual carefree kid smile.

“I say, Ryner and Kiefer. This is really good. We’re lucky to follow Sion.”

Tony then said,

“Looks that way. Sion’s really amazing. How did he exert so much power on the army...”

Following the rest from behind, Fualu wasn’t crying anymore, but her eyes were still red as she pat Kiefer on the shoulder, “We won’t die. Don’t cry, alright? Kiefer, our future is still long.”

Sion stared at Ryner for a while, and then whispered,

“Didn’t I say it? It’s great to follow me, isn’t it?”

Ryner still kept his sleepy look and shrugged his shoulder.

And then, he turned to look at Kiefer.

But for some reason, Kiefer was the only one who still looked depressed...

Part 8

Sion and Ferris were at the garden in the Eris residence.

Actually, Iris was also inside the garden, but she was happily playing. She excitedly ran to fetch the ball Ferris threw, and then did so again once Ferris threw the ball a second time. Even though it looked like there's a little problem with the game itself, the person involved looked rather happy.

Right now, she was running to fetch the ball Ferris threw out at a distance an ordinary human can't imagine.

Let's not talk about Iris for now.

"What happened after that?"

Sion asked. Ferris then chewed on the dango Sion bought and answered,

"Really good. Maybe it's because war is breaking out. The enemy's actions were rather hasty recently. I suppose we will be able to figure out who's the mastermind."

"Really?"

At this moment.

"Sister I fetched the ball back! The ball fell into the lake, so I had to dig it out from underwater. How is it? Am I fast? Iris is amazing, right?"

The thoroughly wet Iris looked absolutely delighted as she returned and handed the ball over to Ferris.

After receiving it, Ferris said,

"Really amazing, Iris. Try to reduce the time needed to get it back next time."

Ferris said that, and then threw the ball out. Nobody could imagine where her arms got such strength, and nobody knew how she threw the ball out. Anyway, the ball was thrown out without a trajectory at all as it went straight out at an

unbelievable speed as it immediately disappeared from the sight.

To be honest, it's really impossible to ask someone to chase after this kind of ball.

However, Iris looked delighted and said,

"You want to see me, right? Iris will definitely find the ball faster!"

After saying that, this child ran off at an unbelievable speed too.

After playing with Iris for a while, Ferris again turned to Sion.

"As for you Sion, are you going to the battlefield too?"

Sion nodded his head.

"Ahh. That's the aim of that academy. The higher-ups have already decided to send forces in 2 days."

Ferris looked emotionlessly in the direction that Iris had run off in.

"Really?"

She muttered.

There was a short moment of silence between the two.

It was hard to imagine what Ferris was thinking through her expression, but...

Sion said,

"I say, Ferris. Are you actually worried about me?"

However,

"No, I'm just thinking that no one will be here regularly to deliver dango for me."

Ferris immediately answered.

The answer came too quickly that one may feel that it was overly blunt...

Sion couldn't help but chuckle.

"Ahaha, that's just like you Ferris. I'll make arrangements for the dango stall then. I'll ask them to send dango over here. But..."

"Un, I'll continue to track down that mastermind. I'll return the favor to them

for wasting a pitiful pretty girl on boring surveillance work...fufufu.”

Ferris said that with an expressionless look.

Let’s not talk about why this girl who had a rare beautiful and emotionless look would be pitiful. Sion looked at Iris who was running back at an amazing speed and said, “I’ll leave the rest to you then. I’ll go to the battlefield for a while before coming back. I won’t die. I’ve made arrangements to be sent to a safe area.”

“What the heck? You intend to come back alive?”

Ferris actually said that as if it was a pity. Sion ignored it for now. That’s their way of interaction.

At that moment, Iris returned.

“How is it? How is it? Iris is fast right? Big brother Sion, Iris is fast right?”

Sion nodded his head.

“That’s too fast. You’re really amazing, Iris.”

“Heheh. Ain’t I right? Iris was always amazing!”

Sion patted the smiling Iris on the head and smiled.

“I should be heading back then. I’ll be sent out with the forces in two days time. I’ll leave everything else to you then.”

“Nn. Don’t forget to arrange for the dango.”

“How about you worry about me for a bit?”

“The dango?”

“No...well, never mind. I’m leaving then.”

With that, Sion turned and left.

Part 9

The sky was completely blue.

Including Ryner, Kiefer, Sion and his allies, the battalion of almost 120 people was positioned to the south, at the Rokzan Plains near the border of Estabul.

They had finally stepped onto the battlefield.

A battlefield filled with death...

But the atmosphere on the road was rather delightful.

“Ah, speaking of which, it’s great that we can be Sion’s allies.”

“Yeah! Now we can escape death!”

“Did you see the looks of those sent to the combat zones? They looked really pitiful...”

“Ahh, anyway, we’re really lucky.”

Everyone was chatting away,

The captain of the Roland Army roared at them,

“Be a little tense, will you! Stop your chatter!”

However, nobody paid any attention to him. As it was really too noisy, Sion could only round off.

“Everyone, it’s better to remain quiet. It’s unlikely that we will be in danger, but we’re heading onto a battlefield. It’s better for everyone to remain alert.”

The battalion of 120 people immediately went quiet. Such amazing leadership ability. Speaking of which, the people gathered here were all under Sion, so it’s to be expected that they would listen to him.

On seeing this, the captain looked somewhat irritated.

“Don’t get cocky. Hurry up and move forward!”

“Yes, captain!”

The battalion started to move forward again.

Ryner also took lazy steps as he followed everyone.

“I say, Ryner...”

“Hm?”

“Uun, it’s nothing.”

“What’s up?”

“...”

Ryner tilted his head suspiciously, and then he was pushed on the back by the people behind him.

“Yes, yes, I’m going.”

Ryner continued to walk forward leisurely as he said that.

The battlefield was really closing in on them.

Part 10

That night...

There were 2 pairs of similar blue eyes hidden in the darkness. One pair hadn't had any expression, while the other one was full of naivety.

Ferris and Iris.

They were hidden inside the Roland Empire, inside the residence of the Samuels family, which was considered of nobility. Or rather, they were hidden inside the house, and right around the master bedroom.

Iris said,

"Sister, sister. Is that bald old man the so-called mastermind?"

"Nn, that's right. You have to remember this. Someone who looks like this is called a mastermind. Mostly, those masterminds are bald, middle-aged and fat."

Ferris didn't even flinch when she presented such a biased view.

Actually, it was true...

In the current situation, the one lying on the bed was really a bald old man, and from what Ferris investigated about the assassins entering the Samuels family home, the owner of the Samuels family, Buroff Samuels, was the mastermind behind all of this, so there wasn't anything to be disputed here.

Iris' eyes glittered.

"Hehe! So this kind of face is called a mastermind? Iris just got a little smarter! Then, what should we do, sister? Are we going to kill him? Are we going to bring him back home for interrogation?"

A child so young who could say such words without a change in expression... The Eris family is really scary...

Ferris was very satisfied with Iris' attitude as she nodded her head and said,
"Let's interrogate him."

After a while,

In the Eris family home.

"Y, you!? Who are you! I, I'm the master of the Samuels family! You dare to do such a thing!? Do you know what will happen...UWAH!"

Before he could even speak, Buroff, who was all tied up with a rope, had a bucket of water splashed on him, and he couldn't help but moan.

Beside him, Iris was squealing excitedly,

"Water, water—more more water!"

Iris Eris started singing the song she improvised as she used both hands to hold three buckets full of water and swayed them gently.

This scene alone would be rather abnormal.



An otherworldly beauty was standing in front of Buroff. She had glamorous blond hair and an abnormally beautiful face, but her face looked as cold as ice, and there was a sword at her waist, one that didn't seem to match her luxurious looks...

Of course, this beauty was Ferris.

She stared at Buroff.

"Answer me immediately. Sion Astal..."

Before Ferris could finish, Buroff interrupted her.

"Who, who are you? You know who I am, and yet you did...UWAH!"

However, that was all he could say. Ferris gave a look, and Iris splashed water on his head.

"Who, who are yo...UWAH!"

Splash!

"I'll definitely not forgi..UWAH!"

Splash!

"You...UWAH!?"

Splash!

"Wa, wait...if you continue splashing water on me like that, my breathing...UWAH!"

Splash!

"Very good, Iris. That's enough. After this, get the nails ready."

"Yes—sister!"

On hearing the spine-chilling conversation between the sisters, Buroff's face stiffened.

"Wa, wait! I...I got it. I'll say it..."

After saying this, Buroff stopped.

"Un!"

Ferris quickly took the nails that Iris handed over and threw them at Buroff.

Swoosh!

It sounded like a nail, but actually 5 nails flew out from Ferris' hand and stabbed the ground Buroff's body was lying on.

"Ugh~"

Buroff's face immediately became pale.

Ferris gave an icy cold stare as she looked at that face.

"Alright, do you know the entire situation now? Let me ask you. Are you the one who ordered the assassins to kill Sion Astal?"

"S, Sion Astal? Ar, are you Astal's subordinates?"

Another nail went past Buroff's face.

"Ugh..."

Ferris played with the nails in her hand as she said,

"You don't have the right to raise questions. Just answer my questions."

"You, you're...getting too cocky..."

Even though it ended up like this, Buroff was still being antagonistic to them. On hearing that, Ferris threw away the nails in her hand.

"Are you certain? That's a pity. Since you want to show this attitude no matter what..."

Swoosh, Ferris drew out the sword at her waist. Under the bright light of the moon, the sword that was glowing with a little yellow in the darkness...

This girl with paranormal beauty looked just like a death god.

"Die."

She slowly raised her sword.

Immediately.

"Wa, wait! It, it's meaningless for you to do that, right? You're assassins hired by Astal, right? Astal will definitely die, so it's meaningless for you to kill me

anyway. So, so, just spare me already!"

On hearing these words from Buroff, Ferris' eyes immediately narrowed. She let go of the sword in her hands, sheathed it, and asked, "You said that Sion will die? What do you mean?"

Suddenly, Buroff sneered as it seemed that he thought that he managed to keep his own life. His face showed a cocky and damning sneer.

"I say, that Astal will definitely die. He's trapped. Do you know the situation at the Rokzan Plains he's heading to now? 50 mage knights of Estabul believed the false information we spread out and are gathered there. As everyone knows, the mage knights...are called the strongest forces in the army. They're a group of monsters. Only a group of mage knights can defeat a group of mage knights. They're not something those half-baked birds Astal secretly gathered could fight. They will be annihilated. That Astal chose the most dangerous battlefield for himself, and even thought that he would be going to the safest place. Hehe! It's funny, isn't it? And we've planted a mole amongst Astal's loyal comrades. Hehehe! Really...that guy's really stupid! He's just our...no, the princes' plaything. Thinking that he actually has a chance of winning. Really...hehe!!"

Buroff continued to laugh.

"Either way, that Astal's just a dog who walked out from lowlife, a dog who's only moving wildly in our palms and will be shot to death. What's the point of you helping such a person? Maybe you got some money from that guy, but you don't have any sense of duty to that Astal right? How's this? I'll pay you twice the amount Astal paid. Will you become my lover? That beautiful face of yours...he, hehe. That thing of mine is better than the sword...argh!"

Before he even finished, Buroff was hit heavily in the back of the head by Iris, and immediately passed out.

"This perverted mastermind! You can't look at sister with such lowlife eyes! Right? Am I right? Sister?"

Iris looked back at her sister, but Ferris didn't answer her.

She looked like she was thinking about something as she looked far away.

"Sister...ah, I see...are you worried for big brother Sion?"

But Ferris shook her head.

"No."

"Sister. Will big brother Sion die? We won't have any dango to eat then, right?"

Ferris didn't answer as she muttered to herself.

".....Did he say...prince? What in the world did Lucile do..."

At this moment, Ferris felt a strange presence, and immediately tensed up. Though she didn't feel anything just now, it felt like she was covered in an uneasy feeling...

Ferris' eyes turned to look at the presence.

Ferris' eyes became sharper and narrower...

An unknown man stood there. The blond man, who reeked of a demonic presence, stood with his seemingly weak back to Ferris as he looked up at the sky.

"That's a nice moon, Ferris. I really wish for us siblings to enjoy the moon together on such a nice day."

It was Lucile.

His body gave a proud and evil presence.

Under the reflection of the moonlight, his profile gave an ominous feeling.

"Nn...brother? Why are you here?"

"Asking me what I'm here for? Such a cold sister. Can't I enjoy such a nice night with my sisters?"

At this moment, Iris hid behind Ferris for some reason and then said,

"No! I hate you, brother! You won't play with me and want me to train all the time!"

"Ahaha, you really like Ferris, right, Iris?"

"Un! I like sister!"

Ferris used her hand to pat Iris, who was clinging to her naively as she

remained cautious.

Against this brother of hers...

"Then, what's your real reason?"

Thus, Lucile slowly turned around...

Immediately, Ferris grabbed Iris by the head and buried her face between her waist.

"U! Ugh! What's wrong, sister? It hurts..."

Iris could only speak those words. Ferris used a karate chop to hit Iris on the neck, who then passed out.

On seeing this, Lucile smiled.

"Ah, so you really love Iris so much, Ferris? It's because of this that I'm always forced to become the hated character. You're really sly, Ferris."

Ferris didn't answer as she merely used her emotionless eyes...

To look at the brother in front of her.

The monster in front of her...

Lucile smiled.

Naïvely.

He gave a childish-like smile, but his hand was grabbing onto the head of Buroff that he sliced off.

He actually took down the head of someone cleanly...

"Ferris, you have to finish your job well. If you continue to let such a person survive, it'll cause lots of damage to the Eris clan, right?"

But Ferris was Ferris as she remained unmoved even after seeing the human head that was sliced off alive...

Ferris didn't care about Lucile's words as she asked.

"...What do you intend to do? The mastermind is a prince? That means Sion is a prince. You knew that already, right?"

On hearing this, Lucile chuckled.

"Well, what do you say? He is really someone interesting, isn't he? Who knows whether he will come back alive or die there?"

At this moment, Lucile raised Buroff's head up high and threw it up.

He then said,

"The Eris family only follows the king, the real king."

".....Did you say...king?"

"That's right. If he died there, it means that he's useless. But, if he came back alive..."

At this moment, Lucile slowly raised his hand, really slowly...

Then,

The moment the head that fell from the sky touched Lucile's hand, it suddenly vanished without a trace...

Even Ferris couldn't tell what Lucile did. All she saw was that he touched it gently and it disappeared.

Lucile again looked up at the sky.

"Yes. If he comes back alive, it'll be my turn to act. I want to follow him while he can satisfy my expectations...how about it, Ferris? Isn't it interesting?"

"Un...I don't think that anyone could come back alive after fighting 50 mage knights."

"It's easy for me."

"Sion's not you."

"That's right. He's not me. I don't have high expectations of his abilities. What I expect from him is something that exceeds power. His fate was always swaying about in the storm. But Ferris, you saved him once before. And I didn't kill him. What does that mean? Fu, fufu...isn't this way too interesting?"

"Really? I don't find it interesting at all."

Ferris turned her back on Lucile as she carried the unconscious Iris and walked

forward.

"Brother, this has nothing to do with me. You're the master of the household."

"Fufu, as cold as ever, Ferris. You're saying that you don't care whether Sion is dead or alive?"

On hearing that, Ferris didn't turn back and said clearly;

"Not at all."

Lucile smiled.

"That's right. That's your personality. And yet you who are like this saved him in the past. Fufu, that's too interesting. Way too interesting."

The sky started to turn white.

Once the night passes, perhaps Sion and his group will reach the battlefield on the next morning?

Will he be able to survive?

Or will he die on the battlefield?

"Is he really the chosen one?"

Ferris muttered.

"...None of my business."

Chapter 4 The awakened one

Part 1

"Alright, we'll set up camp here. Classes 1 and 2 are in charge of protecting the water source. Classes 3 and 4 are in charge of preparing food, and the rest are in charge of setting up tents."

The captain roared out.

The soldiers in the battalion listened to his orders and started to take action.

As the sun rose into the sky, Ryner and the rest arrived at their destination.

Ryner looked around, and what he saw around him were plains and forests. No area was tidied up, and it really looked like the border.

It seemed that the Estabul enemy forces wouldn't be attacking such a place?

"The sun's so warm, ah~ looks like there's nothing to do. How great."

Ryner muttered and immediately sat down. Beside him, Tai said,

"Hey you, help set up the tent too!"

"Ehh~ how troublesome! I don't want too!"

"Haa? You don't want to live any longer!?"

"UUWA! STOP KICKING! I'M AGAINST VIOLENCE! IT HURTS, IT HURTS!...KIEFER, SAVE ME! SAY SOMETHING TO TAI FOR ME! I WANT TO SLEEP TODAY! TELL HIM THAT I WANT TO SLEEP..."

"..."

Normally, Kiefer would be shouting 'stop yapping away. Help out too!' and things like that. However, Kiefer looked unexpectedly depressed as she said, "... Ah? Ahh, sorry. I didn't hear that right. What were you saying?"

Kiefer's reaction was actually like this. Ryner and Tai heard that, and couldn't help but look at each other.

At this moment, Tony said,

"Kiefer. This guy's always slacking and idling away and not willing to help us set up tent. Can't you control him as usual?"

Fualu showed a slightly teasing smile too and said,

"Yeah. This Ryner, why do you always listen to your wife~ so Kiefer, say something!"

And...

"Is that so? Ryner, help everyone set up the tents, or else everyone will be troubled."

Kiefer still used that somewhat lonely and sad tone to say it.

Normally, if someone would talk to Kiefer about Ryner, she would definitely blush and deny it.

Ryner, Tai, Tony and Fualu gave looks at each other, and then...

Tai grabbed Ryner on the throat.

"Wa! Tai! What are you..."

However, Tai continued to choke Ryner on the neck and whispered at his ears in a voice Kiefer couldn't hear, and interrogated him, "You...did you do something to Kiefer and caused her to feel unhappy?"

"I, I don't know! Why do you think that I'm the reason Kiefer's unhappy?"

"Tha, that's because..."

Tai couldn't argue back. Fualu was right beside and showing a delighted look as she too kept her voice down.

"Of course it's because Kiefer likes Ryner. Anyone can tell it. It's too obvious, you know? So if Kiefer's unhappy, Ryner, it'll definitely be because of you. Don't you have any idea? Did you say anything that may cause Kiefer to feel down? Or did you hurt her in any way?"

Fualu immediately cut to the point, and Ryner thought about what had happened before they were deployed.

He recalled it, and couldn't help but cry out,

"Ah..."

"So it's your fault!?"

"GYYYYYYAAAAAAAAAAHHHHHH!!??"

This time, even Tony and Tai made wrestling moves on Ryner, causing him to nearly pass out.

"Ahaha! Ryner's always the same no matter whether it's on the battlefield or anywhere else. Speaking of which, can't everyone help set up the tents? It's tiring to do this alone."

Sion gave a wry smile as he said this.

In the end, no one was able to set up the tent...

On a side note, the gang, including Ryner and the rest, belonged to class 8.

And—

After Ryner's face was busted hard and as he was unable get up, everyone let Ryner off on the basis that he apologized to Kiefer. After that, Ryner nailed the peg for the tent at the wrong position and was nearly beaten to death. At this moment, "Mr Sion, Classes 1 and 2 are going to defend the water point."

"Mr Sion, Classes 3 and 4 are going to find food. We'll be back before night."

The students ran over to Sion to report, and on seeing that, the captain couldn't help but roar out,

"YOU'RE TO REPORT THIS TO ME!"

But everyone ignored him.

"Then we're going, Mr Sion!"

4 classes, 24 people all left the battalion.

Yes. This battalion of 120 people was all Sion's allies...

Ryner was in Sion's group? Even though he had already met everyone... he wasn't good at memorizing other people's names. In the end, he only knew the names of his classmates and a few others...

In contrast, Sion didn't just remember everyone's names, but also everyone's faces, not to mention their profiles as well.

"How hardworking!"

Ryner thought that this was an amazing thing, but was even more amazed that Sion would always work on such troublesome things. That's the reason why Ryner's Ryner.

Let's not talk about this for now.

Once everyone's tent was more or less set up, Sion said,

"Tai, Tony, Fualu. Can you help set up the tents for classes 1 and 2 since they're defending the water point?"

On hearing this command,

"Why do we have to set up tents for others..."

Tai looked like he wanted to protest, but Sion suddenly looked at Ryner.

Ryner inadvertently frowned.

"Ehh, even if you look at me like that, I won't set up some tent or something. It's troublesome, and everyone wants to sleep..."

But Sion smiled at him,

"I know Ryner's personality. Just stay here. You don't look so good, Kiefer, so I think you should rest inside the tent. I'll help out with classes 3 and 4. Do you want to follow me, Tai?"

And Tai smiled.

"So that's how it is? Okay. We'll go out, alright? Tony, Fualu? Alright, let's go!"

"Yeah."

"Fufufu♥ Yeah"

Sion joined in too.

"Then Ryner, I'll leave first."

After saying that, Sion gave a mysterious smile as he left.

Ryner blankly stared at the group that left, and saw the depressed look on Kiefer's face...

"Uu..."

He fell into the trap.

That loose and lazy face looked like it was extremely bothered. He frowned and moaned deep inside.

This was the first time Ryner saw Kiefer look so down. Normally, she would be extremely cheery and liked to bother Ryner.

But right now, she felt really bad.

Ahh...really...that's a troublesome thing...

Even though Ryner thought so, he tried to speak in a slightly sharper voice,

"Ahh~ erm...Kiefer, the weather's fine today..."

His mind was already all fuzzy, and he didn't know what to do...

Ryner's mind was all blank as he couldn't find any suitable words for the time being.

"..."

Kiefer remained silent.

Ryner really couldn't take this pressure.

"Auu...erm...I, I think I'll take a nap..."

At this moment,

"Ryner..."

Kiefer spoke up, she looked really stern as if there's no way back.

She used a trembling yet firm voice that seemed to have some form of determination in it.

"Ryner...do you want to run away with me?"

"Heh?"

What Kiefer said was too unexpected and Ryner couldn't help but be shocked by this and called out.'

But Kiefer didn't care about his response as she grabbed Ryner's arms hard.

"Ryner, listen to me. Run away with me, will you? Don't follow Sion, follow me..."

"Ah, well, Kiefer, what are you saying..."

At this moment.

"I...like Ryner."

Kiefer said.

Kiefer said that she liked Ryner.

Clearly.

Then, Kiefer expressed herself again.

"I like you, Ryner. Ever since we entered the academy...Ryner's my only support. I used to be alone...in fact...I can't make friends. I can't trust any friends."

Kiefer sounded really agitated.

For a while, Ryner really couldn't understand what she was saying.

Can't make friends?

What is she talking about...

Kiefer continued,

"But Ryner, you...you never showed any will, never had any thoughts for this country, and never tried to work hard in life like everyone else. I could think only when I'm with you...unknowingly, I fell for you...I like you, Ryner...even though I can't do this, I fell for you...but Ryner, what about you? Don't you like me, Ryner? Or..."

Kiefer stared at Ryner's face.

Tears rolled down her face...

Kiefer grabbed Ryner hard on the shoulders.

But Ryner...

His eyes didn't show any sparkle as he still remained limp in a lazy fashion... however, those dry eyes were showing a mysterious emptiness for some reason.

"I..."

His eyes were dry, really dry, so dry that it ached.

"Ryner..."

Kiefer closed her eyes and lifted her head up. Her beautiful face was right in front...

Ryner stared at that bewitching face.

Through those limp and lifeless eyes of his.

Through those ominous black eyes of him.

People said that those eyes had the color of death. People said that those eyes had disaster within them.

The people who had such eyes were hated and rejected...

"Ahahaha. What's with you, Kiefer? Really, kidding around like this..."

Ryner gave a dry laugh as he got away from Kiefer.

It's troublesome. Everything's all troublesome...

Kiefer didn't resist at all as Ryner moved away.

"You're right...I really couldn't get anything...I already knew it...even so, I continued to dream on wildly. I'm really a big idiot..."

Kiefer's eyes were just like those of a corpse. The light in her eyes had vanished.

On seeing this, Ryner gave a troubled look.

"Ah, Kiefer, I don't mean this..."

But Kiefer interrupted Ryner's words and continued,

"Even so, I don't want you to die like this Ryner. I just hope that Ryner...but... sorry, Ryner. I can't protect you..."

After saying that, Kiefer's hands drew words of light in the air. She closed her eyes, took a deep breath, and muttered, "I OFFER THE CONTRACTED WORDS, LETTING THE SLUMBERING SPIRIT OF LIGHT DWELL WITHIN."

Immediately, a large ball of light appeared in front of Kiefer.

That's magic...

But that magic was completely different from the Roland magic that needed a magic array.

"Wha..."

Ryner cried out in shock.

This was too strange. Why would Kiefer, a resident of Roland, use a spell Ryner didn't know?

The magic of all the countries were completely different. The activation manner, construct and spell type were completely different, so nobody would normally think of using spells other than their own countries. Normally...

The ball of light that appeared in front of Kiefer slowly rose in the air and bounced.

The orb of light that had been fired immediately disappeared.

After witnessing this scene, Ryner was stunned and looked at Kiefer.

"What are you doing, Kiefer?"

But Kiefer didn't answer. She used her lifeless yet depressed eyes to glance at Ryner,

"Goodbye."

And suddenly walked away.

"Wai...!"

At this moment, Sion appeared from behind.

"What was that light? Ryner, what hap..."

Ryner and Sion could only speak halfway through.

It suddenly happened.

The upper body of a human was thrown at Ryner.

"Ehh..."

It was really the upper body only. He couldn't see the lower body at all.

"WHA, WHAT IS THIS!"

Sion roared.

Then,

Ryner and company were surrounded by screams from all over the place.

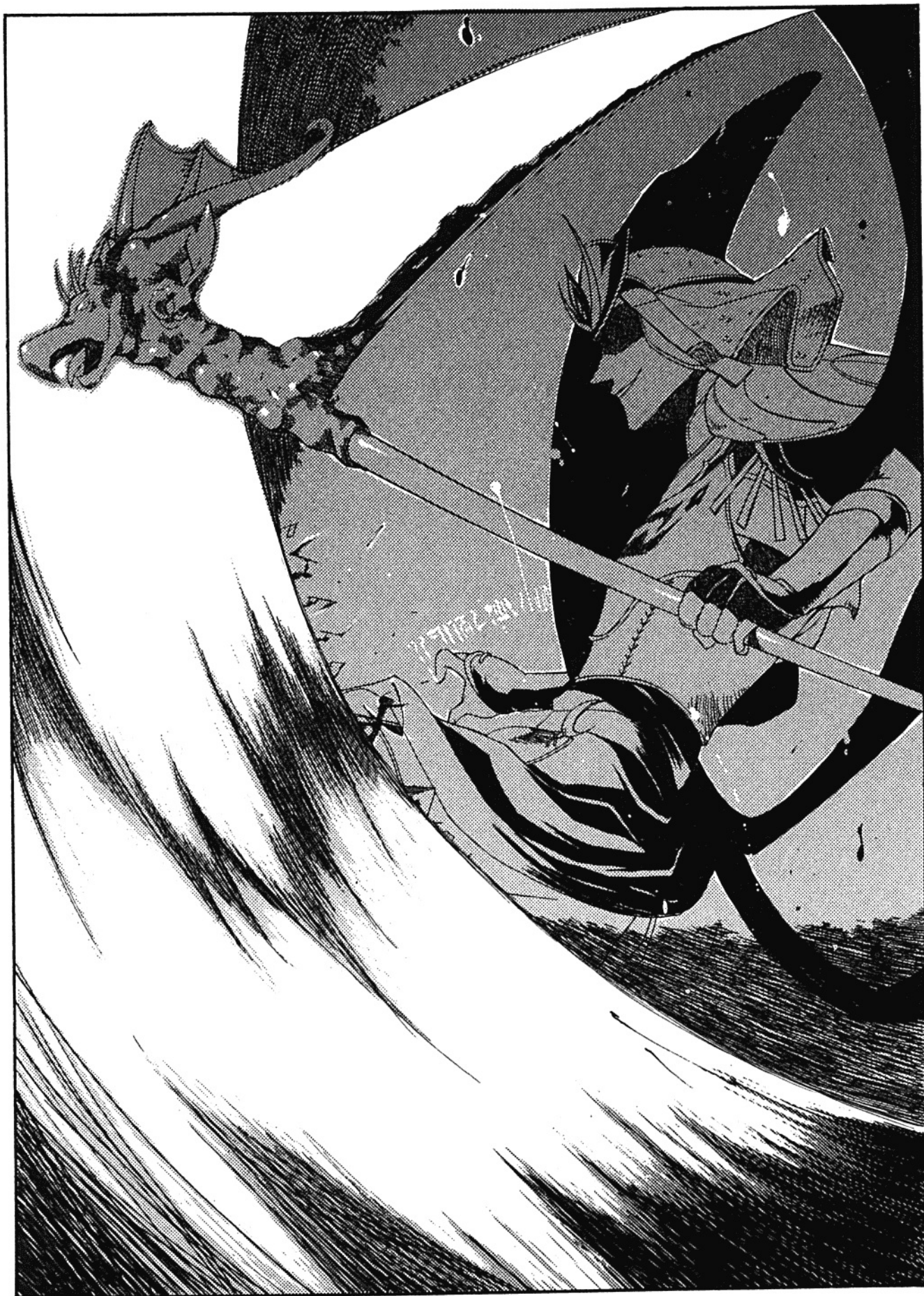
It was a completely radical scene.

A person holding a huge scythe like a death god, in streamlined red armor, was dragging a red afterimage as he ran over the plains at unbelievable speeds.

As the scythe swung, Ryner's allies' heads or bodies were thrown into the air one after another...

That scene was just like hell..

Just like hell.



Sion shouted,

"THE MAGE KNIGHTS FROM ESTABUL!? WHY ARE THEY HERE!"

Why in such a place...

On hearing that, Ryner frowned. The spell Kiefer used looked just like a signal or something.

Speaking of which, did Kiefer summon the mage knights of Estabul? Was Kiefer a spy of Estabul? But why did she do this?

The battalion of comrades Sion assembled shouldn't be a powerful force in the army, and can be said to be just a sacrificial pawn—like a flock of birds gathered. Unbelievably, Estabul would deliberately send a spy out just to crush this squad, and even sent in the mage knights...

And what's the real reason? What exactly happened?

Ryner continued to think.

"Ah, I don't understand at all! This is way too troublesome! How did things end up like this!"

Perhaps he wasn't used to thinking of things like this as he was immediately enraged.

Let's not talk about Ryner's reaction for now. The entire situation was going from bad to worse.

Sion looked around.

"Damn it! If this keeps up, we'll be annihilated! EVERYONE, FALL BACK! TRY AND HIDE IN THE WOODS! REGROUP!"

On Sion's command, the battle situation changed.

The battle members who were stricken with fear and unable to move started to move to the forest.

Once Sion checked that everyone took action, he turned to look at Ryner.

"Ryner!"

"Heh?"

"We must try to survive here!"

"Eh...ah, ahh!"

Both of them started running.

Part 2

In the forest,

Ryner and Sion were hidden under the trees as they held their breath.

They felt that they had already run quite some distance from the battlefield just now, and thus they couldn't see any of their comrades around. Even so, they continued to remain tense.

No, they were in a situation where they had to be nervous.

Sion said softly,

"...We'll be found out if we hide here."

"Really?"

"Ahh. The enemy's the mage knights. They won't just let us off easily, right?"

"But so? But we..."

At this moment, Sion suddenly kept quiet.

Ryner said in a puzzled manner,

"Us? What about us?"

But Sion didn't answer this question.

"Ryner, do you know how many enemies are there? My first confirmation showed that there's 20..."

But the answer he got was,

"No, there's 50."

Ryner shook his head and simply answered.

Sion gave a surprised look at Ryner.

"...You actually knew how many enemies there were in that situation?"

“Since when can I do that? A mage knight that was going about killing was laughing and saying ‘you fool! Do you think you can escape the grasp of us 50 mage knights—!?’ , so there should be 50 of them, right?”

“Oh, I see.”

Sion nodded his head. He then narrowed his eyes and continued,

“Uu... such a messy situation. How many managed to escape successfully... other than the people who went to the water point and to search for food, there’s about 100 of them...”

“...yeah. Then, what are you trying to say?”

But Sion didn’t answer this question.

“Tai, Tony and Fualu are amongst them.”

“I say...”

“Kiefer may be amongst them. What do you think, Ryner?”

“Haa...”

Ryner sighed and said,

“Really...this is really troublesome...yes, yes. I understand. You want me to save them, right? But what should we do? They’re the mage knights, 50 of them...we’ll definitely die if we fight them head on.”

On hearing that, Sion nodded his head.

“That’s right. The only way is to save our comrades and retreat without fighting.”

“That’s impossible, right?”

“But we have to try it.”

“Uuwah...I’m least skilled with dealing with such things that have duty...”

At this moment, Sion’s expression changed. It was a sharp smile that was very competitive. He tensed his muscles.

“You’re right, Ryner...it’s impossible to retreat without fighting.”

Immediately.

Swoosh!

A sharp scythe stabbed into the branch of the tree where Ryner and Sion were hiding at.

“Found you~”

It was a mage knight.

The red mage knight of Estabul.

Both of them seemed to bounce off as they ran away from the scene.

After pulling some distance away from the mage knight, they looked back, and found that three men clad in red armor were standing there.

“Ahh~... that’s the worst situation...”

Ryner frowned.

The mage knights of Estabul...

The sign of death.

Any country would have a squad that’s called mage knights. However...

This squad had the power to level tens of thousands people in an army. Once they appeared on the battlefield, this army of death would annihilate all the enemies and pile up the corpses in the battlefield.

Only a mage knight squadron could match up against one.

Only the mage knights of Roland could match up against the mage knights of the kingdom of Estabul. To those who haven’t even graduated from the academy like Ryner, this was just like fighting with rocks.

Sion was the valedictorian of the academy, but the mage knights were of a completely different level.

Anyone knew that.

Once they’re targeted by the mage knights, there’s only death left.

Sion shouted,

“RYNER! RUN AWAY! I’LL HANDLE...”

But—

“Ahh...how troublesome...”

At this moment, Ryner suddenly regained his composure. Those lifeless eyes were as bleak as ever even in such a tense moment.

He stared decisively at those mage knights with cruel sneers.

They sneered and said,

“Run all you want~ lackeys of Roland, and delight us all you want. I~ will let you suffer as much as possible~”

The mage knight said slowly.

But Ryner still remained unmoving.

“What is it? Have you given up? It won’t be interesting if you don’t run~away? Oh well, since you can’t run away from us, this is the correct decision.”

Sion immediately took action as he grabbed Ryner on the shoulder.

“What are you doing, Ryner? Run! Even if the possibility’s not great, don’t give up!”

Sion tried hard to drag Ryner as he tried to run away.

On seeing this, the mage knights immediately showed delighted looks.

“Hahaa! You look like an interesting person!”

The other two mage knights said,

“Beldom! Don’t play too much and let the lackeys of Roland run!”

“Hurry up and kill them!”

After that, the mage knights swung his scythe and got ready to kill Sion.

Their movements were so swift that it was impossible to tell that they were clad in armor and holding large scythes...

“Damn it...we can’t run...?”

Sion stopped. He let go of the hand that was grabbing onto Ryner’s shoulder and immediately drew a magic array in the air.

“WHAT IS SEEK IS LIGHTNING>>>IZUCHI!”

Immediately, the magic array Sion drew gave a strong glow as it was fired at a mage knight. At this moment...

The mage knight drew out words in the air, a spell that was different from Roland’s magic...

Estabul’s magic.

Just like what Kiefer drew.

So Kiefer was...

The mage knight muttered,

“I OFFER THE CONTRACTED WORDS, LETTING THE SLUMBERING MALICIOUS SPIRIT DWELL WITHIN.”

During this time, the mage knight glowed golden...

He accelerated.

As he was too fast, Sion’s ‘Izuchi’ missed.

“Ku...”

During this time, Sion tried to utter another spell...

“HYHA!!”

There was an overwhelming difference in ability on both sides. Before Sion could even move, the mage knight rushed over and slammed his palm into Sion’s forehead.

“GUA!”

The impact caused Sion to fall backwards as he nearly lost his consciousness. However, the mage knight just wouldn’t let go of Sion’s head.

“HYAHAHAHA! DIE!!”

The mage knight intended to slam Sion into the branch behind...

At this moment, Ryner reached his hand into the air and started drawing words of light at an unbelievable speed.

And...

“I OFFER THE CONTRACTED WORDS, LETTING THE SLUMBERING MALICIOUS SPIRIT DWELL WITHIN.”

Ryner finished the spell, and moved.

With lightning-like speed, he caught up to the mage knight that intended to slam Sion into the tree.

“HOI!”

He aimed an accelerated kick at the mage knight's head.

“GUAH!”

The mage knight let out a cry as he was sent flying with unbelievable force. The force caused even Ryner, who kicked, to be shocked...

Estabul's magic really surprised him...

The mage knight that was kicked away rolled two, three times, and immediately stopped moving.

It looked like he passed out.

After checking that he dealt with the mage knight, Ryner carried Sion up.

“Oi, are you alright?”

“Ah, ahh...but...that magic just now...?”

“Haa, you should know about this, right, Sion? Really, I didn't want to use it. It's been 7 years since I used it...”

“...So that means that's really...”

Before Sion could even finish, the remaining two mage knights questioned.

“Why, why are you...able to use our Estabul's magic!?”

“Who are you!? Are you from Estabul!!?”

“Bu, but we never heard of spies entering Roland!!?”

Ryner seemed to feel rather annoyed as he said to the mage knights,

“Hm? That's because I'm not a spy of Estabul...in that case, how would you

have your information?”

“The, then why are you able to use Estabul’s magic...”

At this moment, the mage knight looked back to see Ryner’s face...

No...

He saw Ryner’s eyes, and started to tremble.

“O, oi...look at that guy’s eyes...those eyes...”

The other man heard that and looked at Ryner’s eyes.

Those eyes were lackluster and lacking will in such a situation.

Black eyes.

And...

Bright red pentacles in the middle of the eyes...

On seeing this, the mage knights looked shocked.

“Tho...Those pentacles...are...are you, are you an ‘Alpha Stigma’ bearer!?”

“What!? The, then, it was you!? You were the one who triggered that calamity...HII!?”

Immediately, the other mage knight cried out.

‘Alpha Stigma’.

People would state this term with fear and hatred...

The mage knight who was in an abnormal state started to tremble as he drew the words in the air.

“I, I OFFER THE CONTRACTED WORDS, RELEASING THE SPIRIT OF LIGHT DANCING IN THE SKY...”

“Idiot! That guy has the ‘Alpha Stigma’! Don’t use magic! Estabul’s magic will be stolen!”

But it was too late.

The power of magic appeared in the sky.

Ryner merely looked at it with his blank expression. He realized that this magic was different from Roland's magic. He deciphered Estabul's magic structure, formation, nature, power and then...

Ryner's hand moved at a speed at which an ordinary person could not hope to see.

"I OFFER THE CONTRACTED WORDS, RELEASING THE SPIRIT OF LIGHT IN THE SKY..."

'RELEASING THE SPIRIT OF LIGHT IN THE SKY'.

Ryner continued to perfectly copy the enemy's magic construct, and the completion of the magic spell was just a split second late.

But the one who attacked first was Ryner.

The beasts that appeared in light and irregular beast shapes were above Ryner's head.

And attacked the two mage knights...

"Th, this guy's a...monster..."

The mage knights were attacked ferociously and lost consciousness.

After checking that the enemies were defeated, Ryner looked unhappy.

"I already deliberately weakened the power already. Don't call me a monster..."

The battle ended just like that.

Ryner alone easily defeated 3 mage knights.

This was the power of the 'Alpha Stigma'.

This was the power of Ryner, who was often ranked last...

Sion witnessed all of this.

"I say, you!"

He suddenly knocked on Ryner's head.

"WAH! You...he? Heh? Why whack me all of a sudden?"

Ryner said unhappily.

But Sion still looked unhappy.

“At least there’s a limit to playing dumb! If you used such power at the beginning, you could have sent even 50 mage knights running back, right!? Wouldn’t our comrades have wasted their lives for nothing!?”

“Do...don’t kid around! How can I even beat 50 mage knights? Those enemies were just shocked that they saw my ‘Alpha Stigma’ and got careless, so I was able to beat them easily. Besides, it’s just 3 of them...no, only 2, you know? Stop joking.”

“Even so, but if you used that power on the battlefield, at least...”

But Ryner ignored Sion and turned around before sighing deeply.

“Haa, didn’t I say it? I have my reservations too. That was the first time I used magic in 7 years...and...”

But Sion immediately understood Ryner’s words.

“Damn it! What am I doing! No...sorry. I was too agitated. I lost so many of my allies in an instant...”

“...Un, I got it.”

Sion said,

“Let’s go save our comrades!”

“Un...”

Just like that, while both of them wanted to return to that path...

“Fm, is this your doing?”

A voice suddenly rang.

Looking up, another mage knight unknowingly stood in front of both of them.

No, he wasn’t any ordinary mage knight. He was wearing the same red armor, but the shape of the armor was a little different. And the presence he gave off was extremely stable.

The man saw the 3 mage knights that fell behind Ryner and Sion.

“Ho...so the 3 of them were knocked out? How did you do it? I don’t think you have such power...”

Ryner and Sion immediately tensed up. This knight was obviously different from the knights just now. There was no opening from him, and there was no intent of letting his guard down.

And—

Another mage knight walked over from behind the man.

“Captain. The guys that escaped north were all...”

Before he could finish, the mage knight found Ryner and Sion, and of course, saw the 3 magic knights that collapsed behind them.

“AH!? Beldom and the rest? Yo, you did this? But how...”

At this moment, the man called the captain raised his hand to stop his mage knight subordinate.

“Stop it, Lacus. I’m talking here. Say it. You’re the ones who beat the mage knights of Estabul, right?”

Ryner and Sion backed away.

This man’s face...

His tone was calm, but his face looked as ferocious as a beast. And there were two mage knights in front. Ryner and Sion had to beat them before the number of enemies increased...

Otherwise, even if Ryner had the ‘Alpha Stigma’, they would still be killed.

Ryner took action.

He drew words in the air and tried to chant Estabul’s magic.

However, this man didn’t look surprised at all as he looked steadily into Ryner’s eyes.

“Hoho, an ‘Alpha Stigma’? That’s rare. So that’s how you beat my subordinates? You...Roland swine!!”

Immediately, the man's presence changed as he gave off intense killing aura. However, he didn't move as he glanced at several spots behind Ryner.

"EVERYONE MOVE UP! THERE'S A MYSTERIOUS BEAST HERE! CAPTURE HIM!"

Immediately, tens of mage knights that were hidden in the forest unknowingly leaped out.

"What!?"

Ryner was shocked and inadvertently stopped the chanting of the spell...

Against so many enemies, he had no chance of winning.

And at this moment—

Sion was sent flying by the mage knights.

"Si...UAAHH!!"

Then, Ryner was kicked hard in the back too as he was sent flying forward. Someone then stepped on his head...

"Ugh..."

The man who stepped on Ryner was that man called the captain, the one who looked like a beast.

Ryner couldn't move at all. Perhaps it was because he was kicked in the back that his vital spots were hit. He just felt his brain swaying, and couldn't get his balance. And with so many mage knights...

Even in a normal situation, it's not really possible to win this battle.

Just when he was thinking about it...

KO!

The man exerted more force on Ryner's head, and Ryner's consciousness faded somewhat.

The man said,

"Hohoho. So the 'Alpha Stigma' isn't as impressive as it's said to be, huh! But it's kind of rare. Dig his eyes out for me! I want to keep them as a trophy!"

Ryner just stared blankly at the man's face.

Such a useless man...

Was he going to allow this man dig his eyes out...

These eyes...

Though these eyes may be special...

It may not be bad to dig them out. These eyes will one day become a burden...

He would be rejected, feared...

Haa...everything's so troublesome...

Will my eyes be dug out like that...

Oh well. I'm going to die anyway. Doesn't matter if it hurts or not...but if I can choose it, I really don't wish for it to hurt...

Just when he thought till there, another strong impact struck his head.

The man felt just like a rock as he continued to kick Ryner on the head.

And said to Ryner,

“What’s with that expression of yours!? Shouldn’t you be more scared or something!? Let me enjoy it more or something. Hm? I’m fuming here, you know! I got messed around by that traitor girl, bothering me come to such a desolate place! I don’t see any Roland mage knights, but some useless brats. What’s going on? And I have to see your stinking face like this, you brat!”

After that, Ryner got kicked on the head again.

“Uu...”

His mouth was broken inside, and his brain was all fuzzy.

The man’s words spun fuzzily in his head.

The traitor girl...

Was he referring to Kiefer?

Ahh~ so Kiefer escaped successfully...?

What about Sion...?

At this moment, Ryner got kicked again.

“ ... ”

This time, he didn't even let out a sound. Also, he started to feel numb too.

He just felt that nothing mattered...

He never liked to work hard anyway...

His mind was just thinking about all these useless things.

At this moment, Ryner was grabbed by the hair as he was dragged up.

The man's face appeared in front of him.

“Oi, monster. You're really irritating me here! I hate those guys who give up the most. Those who only know how to give up, those who only know how to run; how can this man here find it fun? Hm? What's with that expression? 'Alpha Stigma' bearer? Hoho, how funny. Oh well. Enjoy this with me. That's your comrade.”

With his hair being grabbed onto, Ryner turned into another direction.

And he saw—

Sion and Kiefer with their arms held behind as they stood up.

Immediately, Kiefer looked away when she saw Ryner, and Sion angrily stared at Ryner...no, that man who was grabbing Ryner.

The man said,

“Look at those two. What do you think? Hm? Monster?”

“ ... ”

Ryner didn't answer. He didn't even have the strength to answer back.

And the man sent another punch at Ryner.

“If you don't know, let this man here tell you! I killed all your comrades. Hohoho those two are your only comrades left.”

Ryner saw that Sion looked shocked when he heard that and muttered to himself,

“What...this means, Tai and...Fualu...”

But Ryner didn't feel anything. His mind was abnormally clear, just thinking that everything didn't matter...

"Oi, what's with that expression? You're really boring! Or is it that no matter how many I kill, it doesn't matter to an 'Alpha Stigma' monster?"

Monster...?

This term echoed inside Ryner's mind.

Yes. I'm a monster. People often curse me like this.

Monster, monster, monster.

A dirty monster.

Whenever Ryner showed his power, he would be called a monster.

Once he released his power, he would be called a monster.

It was scary. It was really scary.

Even if someone died or was sacrificed...he was a monster, so he didn't have blood or tears.

His mind was becoming clearer.

His thoughts were becoming clearer.

The man said,

"Looks like you can't make it. This guy won't respond no matter what I say. Did I kick him too hard? Hoho. Oh well, time to end it end. Shall we start to clear up? Kill that silver haired brat immediately. As for the woman...do whatever you want. Just leave a share for me."

Immediately.

"GYAH...u...uuahh."

Sion was ganged up and beaten again and again.

It was a strange scene. Sion was being beaten by those people who were mocking him...

If this kept up, he might die.

Ryner used those dazed eyes to look at this scene.

Death...

Death...

Sion, Kiefer, me, and everyone...

Lots and lots and lots of deaths...

His consciousness was fading gradually.

He was scared.

But his consciousness...

At this moment, the screams and cheers could be heard.

Kiefer's screams and the men's cheers.

"STOP!? NO!!"

The men surrounded Kiefer.

The men...surrounded Kiefer...

Ryner's eyes narrowed.

Sharply, really sharply...

There wasn't any feeling at all.

Things that was important to him were about to return to zero.

That's good.

That's good.

Is this what I want?

It feels clear. It's clearer. Everything that forms everything in this world spread through his vision...

In values, pictures and diagrams.

People will die.

But everything doesn't matter.

Let's end everything.

According to my wish.

Open.

Kill.

Kill everything.

Kill everything in front of me...

“Ah, ahhh.”

Ryner didn't realize it, but the voice came out of his mouth. But so what? Nothing mattered anyway. His consciousness was fading more and more. Everything will vanish. It was too troublesome. No matter whether he was dead or alive, it was still too troublesome...

"Ah,
AAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAHAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAAA!

Ryner started laughing in a maniacal manner.

“What’s with this guy? Has he gone mad?”

The man looked back at Ryner in surprise while he was laughing madly. The mage knights around him looked over at Ryner too.

And...

“You...”

The man looked at Ryner and muttered,

“Wha, what...are you doing!?”

Ryner's eyes widened.

There was a bright red pentacle in the center of the eye. Pentacle. Pentacle.

There wasn't just one. Pentacles continued to multiply in Ryner's eye. One of them suddenly came out of Ryner's eye and entered the man's chest.

“Heh? This is...”

Before the man could even say anything, he could only hear a voice that seemed to come from nowhere...

‘Don’t defy me. Your molecules shall scatter like sand.’

With the strange sound, SWOOSH, the man became sand.

And disintegrated...

“WHAT!?”

“WHA, WHAT DID YOU DO!?”

The mage knights saw this and went completely pale. Everyone immediately tensed up and surrounded Ryner.

“Wha, what was that...was it magic? Was it magic!?”

But Ryner didn’t answer. He wasn’t laughing maniacally like before, but continued to keep his mouth shut as he didn’t open it.

However...

‘God. Demon. Devil. Hero. Monster. What do you scum call me? WHAT DO YOU CALL ME? HAHAAHAHAHAHA!!!!!’

The voice rang. Laughter rang. The voice entered the minds of the mage knights directly.

It was a voice that would bring about anxiety and despair in the hearts of people.

On hearing this voice,

“WHA, WHAT’S THIS!?”

“KI, KILL HIM! ANYWAY, THIS GUY’S...”

The mage knights immediately panicked.

Several mage knights started chanting spells. Even though they knew that they may sacrifice their comrades when casting magic in such a tight area...they never showed any hesitation at all. They were so scared of this certain thing that was right in front of them.

“I OFFER THE CONTRACTED WORDS, RELEASING THE POWER OF THE SPIRIT OVERCASTING THE SKY!”

The mage knights were chanting the same spell. Once they chanted it, a blue vortex appeared in the sky and was released at Ryner.

“GO TO HELL, MONSTER!”

“BECOME DUST UNDER THE STRONGEST SPELL OF ESTABUL!”

After that,

‘Magic? You call this magic? Such a simple structure!? HAHAAHAHAHA!!!’

The voice rang again.

Ryner then raised his hand, and a pentacle that rolled from his eye landed on his palm.

That pentacle was giving off bright red light.



‘Analyse existence. Diffuse.’

Immediately.

The blue vortex that came at Ryner disappeared. Also, several mage knights that were standing right in front of Ryner disintegrated into dust through unknown means.

“...”

Having witnessed this...

The other mage knights couldn't say anything.

The power was too shocking.

This wasn't just the power at the level of a monster or a monster-class.

This was...

“...God's...”

A mage knight muttered as he trembled.

At this moment, Ryner widened his arms out, and then his voice rang.

‘The (α) beginning is destruction. I don't create anything. I don't bless. I don't redeem. I just erase, completely.’

And—

Ryner moved.

He grabbed the man in front of him on the head and pressed the pentacle on his palm on him.

‘Shatter.’

Once it was spoken, the man shattered after hearing the command.

“Hi, hii!!?”

The bright red imprint also pressed down on a mage knight who looked like escaping.

‘Break.’

The next moment, he was destroyed.

“Ha..ha...hahahahahahaha!! Disappear. Collapse. Burst. Perish.”

Several mage knights went stiff due to overwhelming fear and couldn't move. The other mage knights were desperately trying to chant magic and try to make their final comeback.

But all these were useless...

“HE, HE’S A MONSTER! WE’RE GOING TO GET KILLED!!”

“RUN!!”

The mage knights started to run away.

However—

‘I won’t let you run away. I’m going to make all of you disappear. All of you, all...’

At this moment, Ryner’s eyes—no, maybe we shouldn’t be calling him Ryner—showed the profile of a girl and a man beside her...

Kiefer and Sion were looking shocked at Ryner. What appeared in their eyes were fear, intimidation, hatred...

And an extremely unpleasant feeling.

A sharp pain went through his head. He felt that he had to eliminate them. It was easy for him to do so.

It was easy for him to destroy and wreck them.

Ryner raised his hand, and then—

His body continued to tremble.

No. He couldn’t kill. His body didn’t move.

Why?

The voice rang.

‘Wha, what’s going...the power...the pentacle’s vanishing...! What the...the contract...no...destroy...everything...’

Ryner again started to move and slowly arrived in front of Kiefer and Sion before grabbing them on the throat and raised them.

“Ah...Ry...ner...stop...”

“Guu...”

Both of them moaned.

On hearing their moans, Ryner’s movements became slower as the strength seeped out from him...

He had this feeling before. When he wanted to kill that girl back then, he was shocked to find that his strength was disappearing...

Ryner tried his best to gather his strength and choked Kiefer and Sion on the necks as he moaned,

“You two...are too dangerous...die...damn it...my strength...disappearing...my eye’s...closing...”

Kiefer shouted.

“RY...NER!”

Immediately, the fatal pain went through Ryner’s body.

Ryner frowned. No, it looked like he was resisting something and frowning as his body trembled.

‘No...don’t...don’t...close...’

Just when Ryner’s eyes were half closed, the force in his hands was suddenly released.

Sion used this chance to get away from Ryner’s hand, kicking the arm that was tightly holding onto Kiefer’s neck and forcing him to let go.

“I see...so that’s how we counter?”

Sion put his hand on Ryner’s face—no, his eyes...

“How about I help you cover it?”

On hearing Sion say this, for some reason, Ryner’s face showed a slightly agitated expression.

‘Stop it...you...people...’

Then—

The voice stopped.

“ ... ”

Just like that, the trio remained silent for quite a while.

Then, Ryner tugged at Sion's hand and said,

“I'm alright.”

He let go of Sion's hand.

Sion continued looking at Ryner's face, and Ryner in turn deliberately looked away while looking like he was deliberately trying to escape. Those loose and limp eyes...no, those eyes that seemed to have some sadness in them watched Kiefer who was shocked as she sat down and remained silent, and then looked around...

Some were scattered into dust. Some were sliced up...the mage knights who died in more ways than what one could imagine were piled up.

It was really an unbelievable scene of a massacre.

Ryner then looked at the hand that lost the pentacle.

“...Again.”

He merely muttered.

Seeing that Ryner really went back to normal, Sion looked around.

He looked at the corpses that piled up, looked at Ryner, at Kiefer, and then said to Kiefer,

“...It was my mistake to choose you. Tai, Tony, and Fualu...it was my mistake for the sacrifice of my allies. It's the same for the war...and also that I'm still not king now...”

He narrowed his eyes.

And the trio turned to look back.

They didn't notice it till now, but there was an earth rumbling loud sound. Behind them...far away, they could barely see a large army whipping up the earth as reinforcements moved forward.

It was the army with the flag of the Roland Empire.

Army.

Soldiers.

The group that was gathered to kill.

Ryner witnessed this,

“How worthless.”

And muttered again.



Chapter 5 Sad pasts

Part 1

Ryner Lute was sleeping alone in his room. His room was the same as ever. There wasn't any decoration other than the bed, and it looked empty. And around the bed, there were the things that Kiefer left for him...

Of course, the whereabouts of Kiefer herself was still a mystery.

At that battlefield, she was immediately arrested by the mage knights of Roland and was forcefully separated from Ryner and the rest.

“...”

Ryner lay down on the bed and looked around at the stuff that wasn't cleared at all.

“Haa...don't just leave stuff around in my room like that. It's troublesome to clear them up...”

He gave a listless look as he muttered, and looked up at the ceiling before closing his eyes slightly.

Just like that, the war ended without any hassle.

Estabul surrendered just like that. The reason was simple. The strongest squad of Estabul—the Estabul Kingdom's Mage Knights were defeated by a minor character...

This report was brought back into the country by the surviving mage knights of Estabul, and once it spread, it caused Estabul itself to panic.

Thus, Estabul immediately requested to surrender to Roland.

Speaking of which, it couldn't be helped, right?

They felt that they couldn't match up against a soldier's power that was able to crush 50 of the strongest force in the country, one that bore its prestige — the mage knights.

Thus, Estabul became Roland's territory.

Right now, Roland was delighted over having defeated an enemy they had been warring with for a long time.

Delighted about this hero who single-handedly defeated the enemy.

A man called Sion Astal.

Of course, the fact was that Ryner annihilated the mage knights.

At that time, when the legend where a hero uses his power to destroy the enemy spread through the citizens, Sion immediately stated his own name. Besides, from what Ryner heard, Sion himself had royal blood...

Perhaps it was because of this reason. Sion was suddenly declared the hero who saved the country, or even the next candidate to be king...immediately, he was raised up to the upper echelons of the army.

So, like Kiefer, he would never see Sion again from that day on.

Yes.

Ryner lost everything.

In such a short time.

The war ended, but looking back, those things that were still with him before were all gone.

Even Tai, Tony and Fualu.

However...

"Ahh~ I still have that troublesome school tomorrow...I should skip it..."

Ryner still didn't change his attitude.

At this moment—

The door to Ryner's room was suddenly opened.

"Oi Ryner."

He heard Sion's voice.

But Ryner didn't even look up.

“Nn~?”

“Nn~? What’s with that? Really, you. I say. Hurry up and get away.”

“Ahh? What do you mean? Why must I run...”

Sion interrupted Ryner before he could finish, showing a really bothered look and continued,

“The soldiers are coming to capture you. Based on what happened the last time, the higher-ups of the army decided that it’s dangerous to leave your ‘Alpha Stigma’ alone. If you continue to remain here like this, you’re going to be imprisoned.”

“Heh?”

Sion’s sudden words caused Ryner to call out and get up.

“How did it end up like this? Wasn’t it settled that you were the one who defeated the mage knights of Estabul? Why must I...”

“That’s because I reported my name. The higher ups of the army know that you have the ‘Alpha Stigma’, so they knew easily that you were the one who destroyed the Estabul mage knights.”

This explanation caused Ryner to be confused.

“Wait! Isn’t this weird!? In that case, why are you still able to gain praise? If the fact that you’re the hero of the battle is revealed...”

Ryner asked. Sion seemed to be really tired as he scratched his head and said,

“It’s like this...that was because the army wanted to keep its pride in front of the citizens. They wanted to earn the support of the people, show the emergence of a hero for the people to support the army. Do you understand? But the fact is that the higher ups of the army know that you’re the one who destroyed the mage knights, and they’re scared. They’re scared that you’ll take revenge for abusing them. They didn’t want to give up on that tremendous power of yours, and couldn’t kill you because of this. Thus, they decided to imprison and adopt you. That’s the conclusion.”

On hearing that, Ryner narrowed his eyes.

“...Adopt?”

“Un, that’s what they said.”

“Hn~”

This time, Ryner seemed to be pondering about something, but also didn’t seem like he was thinking about something as he blankly nodded his head.

“Speaking of which, your intel’s rather good, Sion...really amazing.”

Ryner muttered to himself carefreely like an old man in the countryside as he nodded away enthusiastically. On seeing this, Sion couldn’t help but frown.

“I say, the soldiers are coming. Better pack your luggage...”

This time, it was Ryner’s turn to interrupt Sion.

“I actually want to ask you something.”

“Hm? What is it?”

“Since you’re in the higher ups of the army, Sion, you should know right?”

“Know about what? If you don’t move faster...”

“Kiefer, how is she?”

“ ...”

Immediately, Sion didn’t speak.

Ryner kept his still sleepy eyes as he didn’t look anxious at all, and it didn’t look like he had any intention of getting off the bed. Doesn’t he have any intent to run at all?

On seeing this, Sion gave a wry smile,

“Kiefer was locked inside jail. The reason was...to put it simply, she was sent to Roland as a spy of Estabul. No, she wasn’t the only one sent here. She, her younger sister and elder sister were all sent here. They were sent here to send information back to Estabul and allow the mage knights of Roland to be trapped when Estabul launched a war. However...Roland’s forces weren’t that easy to deal with, and their true identities were seen through once they arrived in Roland. At that time, Kiefer’s older sister was immediately killed, and her

younger sister was taken as a hostage...and so she was used back to successfully trap the mage knights of Estabul. That's the case. However, her younger sister who wasn't of much use was already..."

"Fu~n"

Ryner nodded away in an uninterested manner.

Sion stared at Ryner, who had this reaction.

"...Then, you...have no intention of running away?"

Ryner seemed to feel tired as he frowned.

"Eh, well, it's tiring to run away. I have to continue running, you know? No way! I can't do this at all."

That's not the basis of the problem...

And Ryner again lay on the bed.

"Let me take a nap first. I'll think about it afterwards."

At this moment, the door suddenly opened. This time, several fully-armored soldiers immediately rushed in.

"Ryner Lute. High level order. You're under arrest!"

Ryner merely looked at them.

"Ah, you're rather fast."

He had no sense of urgency in his tone at all, and he sounded extremely unmotivated.

Leaning on the door, Sion folded his arms as he saw this, gave an unhappy look and said,

"...Didn't I say so? I told you that they'll be here soon, right?"

"Nn~ who knows if it's nice to sleep inside jail..."

"Who knows?"

"In that case...I'll let them take care of me for a while. Haha. Three meals, a nap. That's a rather good thing now that I think about it. Bye then, Sion."

Ryner was taken away like that with easygoing emotions. What was he thinking? He knew that he was being brought to prison...

Then,

“Ahh. Bye then.”

Sion muttered with a somewhat sad tone.

And thus, both of them went their own separate ways.

Part 2

Now for a change of scenery...

The Eris' family dojo.

This was the second time Sion came to this abnormally large dojo.

He was taken here the first time he came to visit the Eris family, and after that, he was always taken to the garden to meet with Ferris and Iris over the investigation outcome and for some discussion.

He was never brought to the dojo thereafter.

It seemed that the Eris family had another dojo that was of a different size than this one, and all the noble disciples were all taken there. And Sion was taken to this dojo that was forbidden to all except for the Eris family.

Forbidden...

Therefor, there was obviously something suspicious about this.

Why was Sion taken to this dojo?

The first time he was taken to this dojo, Sion was told by the old butler that anyone who visits the Eris residence had to meet Lucile first...

After that, Sion asked Ferris about this, but Ferris merely cleared all of that with one sentence 'Our family doesn't have such a tradition. And as for why you're taken to the dojo, it depends on what Lucile thought. I don't understand at all.'

"..."

And now, Sion was again brought to this dojo.

"Looks like...I'm really popular here..."

To Sion's eyes, this extremely vast dojo was completely empty.

No, maybe it was like the last time. Maybe Lucile himself was already here...

And—

A voice rang from behind. A clear and completely emotionless voice.

“Nn, Sion?”

It was Ferris.

An otherworldly beauty with an icy cold expression.

Those narrow eyes were staring at Sion.

“Why are you here?”

“Eh? No, I came here to look for you and Iris, and I was taken here...”

Halfway through his speech, Ferris narrowed her eyes in a subtle but definite manner, and Sion didn’t say any more.

It was a real emotional change that was different from acting, and this was the first time Sion saw her expression change slightly, and he couldn’t help but keep quiet.

Though it was a change, she merely narrowed her eyes...

But Ferris immediately regained her original emotionless expression.

“Is that so?”

After saying that, Ferris turned her face to the dojo and said with an unrestrained voice.

“Come out.”

Immediately.

In the dojo...

No, a vague figure seemed to appear in Sion’s consciousness before shaping on its own slowly...

A man appeared...

Lucile Eris.

The current head of the Eris clan.

He had bright blond hair just like Ferris, and an unbelievably good-looking face. The smile seemed to be stuck on his face as well.

“Welcome. Sion Astal. First, I must congratulate you on being able to come back safely from such a precarious situation, and even got a recommendation as an exception...did Ferris tell you this before?”

This man appeared just like a monster, but his tone was just like a commoner gossiping away.

Sion was already used to the strange happenings with the Eris family and didn't feel surprised at all.

On hearing Lucile ask this, Sion said,

“Yes. I'm really grateful that Miss Ferris continued to work hard while I wasn't around. When I got the report...”

At this moment, Sion's mind immediately recalled the scene where he met Ferris after returning from the battlefield.

When Sion visited the Eris family, the first thing Ferris said was,

“What? You're still alive? How boring...”

Sion gave a wry smile,

“...Ah, no, anyway, it seemed that I caused a lot of trouble to Miss Ferris. I should be the one saying some thanks here.”

For some reason, Ferris actually nodded her head after hearing that.

“Of course, I don't have anything to say to someone who nearly died.”

“U~n”

Sion snorted, and the wry look on his face got even more pronounced.

Lucile smiled as he looked at the duo.

“Looks like you two are getting along well. Haha, I'm rather happy about that.”

On hearing this, Ferris still remained emotionless as she said,

“That's enough. On to the main point.”

“Oh, that’s right. Let’s get to the main point, shall we? The reason why we invited you here is because I want to know about your thoughts.”

“Thoughts?”

Sion answered in a puzzled manner, and Lucile nodded before saying,

“Yes. Right now, I want to ask you a few questions to decide whether you’re suitable or not. I hope you can answer me.”

“Haa...suitability...? Why? No, I can answer them if you want, but...is that all?”

Lucile, who seemed to be in an unexpectedly good mood, nodded his head.

“Ahh. That’s all. I brought you here for this thing. But you have to accept a condition before I ask you.”

“Condition?”

“Nn.”

And—

Suddenly, Lucile’s expression changed.

He closed his eyes, and his face was extremely, extremely calm,

He then said with a nonchalant tone,

“I’ll ask these questions. If your answers don’t meet what I expect, I’ll kill you. Relax. It won’t hurt. You won’t realize that your brain and body are separated. You’ll just die.”

Die...?

On hearing this term, Sion frowned.

He couldn’t understand. No, rather, even though he witnessed the Eris family doing lots of things people couldn’t understand, but this time...

Why is this man saying such things all of a sudden? He’s going to kill me if my answers don’t match his intent?

This is the condition that I have to accept before he asks me the questions. If I don’t accept this condition, I won’t be questioned...

“...”

He couldn't understand.

Why must I accept such a questioning where there's a likely chance that I'll be killed.

At this moment, Lucile spoke as if he answered all of Sion's inner doubts.

"This is the Eris family, Sion."

Immediately,

Sion's eyes narrowed and showed a sharp expression.

This sentence alone caused Sion to understand the hidden meaning behind Lucile's words.

This is the Eris clan.

The clan that only follows the king for generations.

And the current head of this clan wanted to test Sion to see whether Sion suited his will.

Sion stared at Lucile decisively and smiled,

"I see."

He muttered.

At this moment, Ferris spoke.

"How stupid. Are you going to throw away the life you barely managed to take back from the battlefield?"

But Sion didn't care about Ferris.

He had no need to ask more.

He decided that he would be confused no longer.

No. That battlefield had decided the path he should move onwards to.

He once lost everything.

But he continued to move forward.

With this power, he should be able to kill everything.

His brothers, sisters...even the king...

But...

Sion said,

“Alright, ask me any question then. Try me...Lucile Eris.”

On hearing this, Lucile chuckled.

“Haha, I knew that you could possibly say that.”

Sion closed his eyes.

Yes.

I can't stop now.

I want to kill everyone who gets in my way.

I will accept any condition just to achieve this aim.

Even if I'm...

A demon...

Part 3

That place was in complete darkness.

Ryner was chained up and standing in the middle of the pitch black room.

Surrounding him were familiar faces he had known since he was young. They were all old men who looked like they were dead, with lifeless and emotionless faces.

But right now, those faces were all tense and showed fear...

Ryner looked around at these faces and said with a sleepy tone,

“Hey, are you going to keep me inside a cell? How boring~ I didn’t even misbehave in that academy.”

And then, an old man with a pure white beard who was sitting in the middle seat, said,

“Shut up, you monster! Who said that you can talk!?”

“Monster...ah? Yes, yes. Watch out. If your temper’s too fiery, you might rupture a blood vessel, teacher.”

That’s right. Ryner called this old man teacher. The old man who was the head of the orphanage...

The rest were all military personnel.

The old men continued to lash back,

“It’s because of your meddling that that brat Astal took a great leap forward!”

“It would be alright if you had died on the battlefield with Astal.”

“Do you know how severely we were told off because you survived!?”

“Everything and anything was caused by you! And you low-wretched scum can still get so cocky!?”

Ryner continued to keep his lazy expression as he listened to these lashings that didn't enter his ears at all. He then said, "Hey, did you call me here just to mention your grievances? Ah, I see. You can ease your stress with such a cute pet like me around you, right?"

"STOP YOUR NONSENSE!"

Immediately, one of the old men threw an ash tray over and it struck Ryner on the head. Fresh blood gushed out.

The red trail of blood formed a line and flowed down his forehead...

On seeing this, the old man mocked,

"What's this? The blood's red? Are you trying to imitate a human? You're a monster!"

"..."

Just a monster...

Ryner grew up in such a humiliating environment. Right now, he couldn't feel anything even with people agitating him with such words. He just felt lazy.

No, he didn't just feel numb about it. Even so...

"Eh? My head hurts for some reason..."

"OF COURSE YOUR HEAD WOULD HURT WHEN YOU'RE BLEEDING!"

The old men cursed and didn't treat Ryner's injury as much. They merely continued with their lashings after hearing Ryner's words.

"Brat! Are you treating us as idiots!?"

Ryner still kept his loose expression and simply said,

"You're the ones who're treating me as an idiot, right? I'm the one being treated as an idiot. Well, if there's anything, just say it. These chains are cutting deep inside my flesh. Kinda hurts~ I don't have such unique interests at all, so I don't really feel good..."

Ryner's words caused the old men to feel agitated as they wanted to lash out and humiliate him. However, they finally calmed down...

With intense hatred on their faces, they said again,

“Oh well. The reason why we called you here is to pass on the king’s message. The king said that since you’re locked in prison, he will grant a wish for you as compensation. Since when would a wretched person like you have a right to make a wish...but the compassionate king was really insistent. Remember this. This is the king’s grace. Well, if you have any wish, just say it.”

This sudden compassion caused Ryner to inadvertently frown. He looked around at the old men that were present.

“Compassionate...ah...but I’m still locked up, right? Ah, it’s because of that, right...because of this, the king became fearful of the ‘Alpha Stigma’...so he’s willing to grant a wish for me and hope that I won’t cause any trouble. I see. Is this the carrot and whip logic?”

On hearing this, the old men glared at Ryner angrily.

“SHUT YOUR TRAP! STOP GETTING COCKY THERE!”

Looks like Ryner was right.

“U~n.”

Ryner moaned in a puzzled manner, and then said,

“Uu, since it can be fulfilled, the larger the dream, the better...maybe I can ask for an extremely large pillow inside the jail where I can sleep in any corner...”

And while we shall not talk about what’s great about this dream, Ryner seemed to suddenly remember something.

“Ah...yes. Help me with that.”

And then he stated his wish.

Part 4

It was an icy cold place.

It was a space that was formed by stone blocks, metal bars and despair.

Ryner, who was brought to prison, saw this scene.

“Wow...this place looks even more uncomfortable than what I thought it would be...but it really looks nice to sleep in...”

Even when facing such a situation, he didn't show any tension as he said frivolously.

Looking around, this single-person room was an extremely luxurious room. There were many people of different gender and ages that were completely different from Ryner, completely depressed. Some of them were staring at Ryner weakly, and some were looking at him with mocking expressions.

Ryner waved at these people and said hello to these people. At this moment, the prison warden patted Ryner on the back.

“Hurry up and move, kid! Really! This is the first time someone's entering jail in such a carefree manner.”

“Heh...yeah. A prison provides 3 meals and a nap. I thought a lot of people would like this lifestyle.”

On hearing that, the prison warden chuckled.

“Ahaha. What was that? You're really interesting...this is the first time I hear such logic from someone. Especially since this place is used to imprison some savage and overly psychotic people. They're either first-class criminals or serial killers. My stomach starts to ache the moment I feel that I will be killed once I relax...”

As he was prompted by this slightly talkative prison warden, Ryner continued

to walk through the jail.

“Must be tough on you, uncle prison warden...”

“Yeah. So it’ll be troublesome for such people to get together. See, aren’t those cells all single rooms? These guys are all dangerous people...ah, that’s right. Speaking of which, what did you do? Those who are locked here aren’t normal people...”

At this moment, the prison warden who was joking around with Ryner seemed to realize that he was one of the criminals to be locked up here as his face went completely pale.

One would really want to ask him when he realized this...

Ryner merely said casually,

“Well, it’s because I’ve been taking naps, and my superior found me to be an eyesore...”

“Ah? Naps?”

“Yeah. So he said that since I like to sleep, I should just sleep in jail for eternity. Personally, I don’t think that it’s a bad thing...”

On hearing that, the prison warden actually pat Ryner on the shoulder and shook his head before saying,

“Haa...so you’re locked up because of such a reason. You’re really unlucky...I guess your superior must be someone influential...poor guy...alright! I’ll handle all your living needs here. Speaking of which, this uncle here can’t provide you with anything. But if you want anything, I’ll try to help you out.”

“Oh? Really? Lucky!”

Just like that, Ryner and the prison warden actually formed some camaraderie. At this moment, they arrived in front of his own prison cell.

This cell was like other cells. There were stone walls and metal bars.

The only difference was...

There was someone else inside the cell.

A red haired girl was squatting at the corner of the cell. On seeing this, the

warden said,

“Ara...that’s strange. Why is there someone...”

He took out the official papers from his arms and started to confirm.

Ryner said to him,

“Ah, uncle. It’s alright. I have something to say to this person. Can you give me some time? I think the papers stated it clearly...”

The prison warden again checked the content of the documents.

“Ah, you’re right. Isn’t this, a high level military official document...what’s going on...who are you anyway?”

“U~n, I guess, a pet maybe?”

“Hah?”

“Doesn’t matter anyway. Please open the prison door for a while and come back in about 30 minutes.”

“Ah, ahh, I got it.”

Perhaps the order from the higher ups of the military showed its effects as the prison warden was honest in his attitude.

On seeing, this, Ryner gave a wry smile as he walked into the cell.

After checking that the warden locked the cell and left, he sat beside the girl.

But the girl wasn’t moving already, and it’s uncertain if she was asleep.

Ryner stared blankly at this girl for a while.

She was dressed in dirty clothing, and her hair wasn’t any better. She had her knees hugged together, and she went to sleep without lifting her head as she looked like she didn’t want to be disturbed. This didn’t look like the girl he was familiar with.

After observing her for a while, Ryner’s face suddenly gave a mischievous look as he tapped the girl on the head.

“Oi, Kiefer! Your grades will drop if you continue to sleep!”

“WAH!?”

Kiefer immediately lifted her head. She showed an extremely shocked look as she stared at Ryner, and for some reason, looked around to check something. Finally...

“EH? EH? EH? ISN'T THIS THE PRISON...THEN...WHY ARE YOU HERE, RYNER!?”

She cried out in shock.

With a volume that rang through the entire prison.

Ryner immediately covered his ears and frowned.

“Kiefer, you're way too loud here.”

“...Ah, uu...sorry...what's going on?”

“What do you mean by that?”

“I'm asking you why are you here...”

“Oh...erm, how should I put it...this is really troublesome...”

“Oi, if you came all the way here just to tell me that what you're going to tell me is really troublesome, I'm going to kick you out.”

“I, I got it.”

Though he said this, Ryner was thinking whether he should take a nap first. He shrugged his shoulders.

And then clapped his hands together.

“Anyway, I have something I really have to say to you, Kiefer. I came here specially to tell you this.”

“...Something you have to say to me?”

“Un. That...”

Then, Ryner said with a calm tone without any will,

“Anyway, I have to tell you. It seemed that your sister was killed a long time ago.”

“...!?”

On hearing these words, Kiefer's face lost all color as she couldn't help but

tremble all over.

“Ho, how did you know, Ryner...? Only the higher ups of the country knew about this...”

Saying till here, Kiefer covered her mouth. Those red eyes were staring intently at Ryner. Her eyes...were as frozen as ever. They lost all emotion...

“I...I see. So you’re a fang of Roland too...are you trying to blackmail me for betraying the country? Are you here to kill me?”

“...”

Ryner didn’t answer this. He merely stared at Kiefer with a limp expression.

Ryner’s reaction angered Kiefer all the more.

“Why? Why must you oppress us to such an extent? Aren’t you happy with killing us all? I don’t want to hear it! Saying that my sister died...and, I don’t want...to hear that from your mouth the most, Ryner! You knew all about this? You knew and yet you’re laughing secretly? I actually told you that I liked you...are you secretly laughing at me for being such a stupid woman...?”

Tears fell from Kiefer’s eyes as her expression was as icy as ever as if she felt despair in everything. However, the tears continued to flow in her eyes.

“Or are you going to take revenge for Tai, Tony and Fualu? You can’t forgive me for betraying you all, so you came here to kill him? You want me to feel thorough despair before killing me? Or is that still not enough for you?...What do you want me to do? I already somewhat knew...that my sister was killed. But...what could I do? I couldn’t do anything! I...I...”

At this moment, Kiefer collapsed. She knelt down on the ground and started sobbing.

After staring at her for a while, Ryner sighed.

“Uu~ how troublesome...”

After that, he laid down on the floor and said with the same lifeless tone,

“I really don’t understand...what’s this thing about war? I have no interest in occupying other people’s land~”

Ryner's words were not answering Kiefer's words at all, and Kiefer immediately lifted her head up.

But Ryner didn't bother and continued,

"Tai, Tony and Fualu all died like that...didn't I say it? Taking naps is the best thing in the world. Losing lives because of such stupid things..."

"Wha, what are you saying..."

"I really don't understand...war...why is it started? Must be those who had ambition. But they got those without ambition involved..."

Having said this, Ryner suddenly got up.

"Then, what should those without fight in them do? All I did was just take a little nap, and Kiefer starts crying, Tai and the rest died, and even Kiefer's sister's dead? Now I got Kiefer angry, and even that girl before too...I...I'm not like Sion. I never thought of something troublesome like changing the entire country. But...I just continued to take naps. I never even hurt anyone...what can I do...so as not to hurt anyone?"

Once Ryner said this, he looked at his hand.

A bloodstained hand...

Ryner thought. Even if this hand acted against his will...

That hand scratched the hair that was messed up due to sleep.

"Oi, Kiefer. Why are you spacing out? Did I say something weird?"

"Nothing...that...well, you're the weird one, Ryner. Why all of a sudden..."

At this moment, a voice rang from outside the cell.

"Oi! Ryner Lute. 30 minutes' up. What now?"

It was the prison warden.

Ryner smiled at him.

"Oh, almost done."

Then, he immediately got up and forcefully pulled Kiefer up.

"Alright, Kiefer. Follow me."

“Wait, heh? Heh?”

Ryner pulled Kiefer’s hand while she looked lost and troubled, and dragged her out from the cell.

“Eh? Ryner, wait...”

GACHANK!

Kiefer’s voice was interrupted by the closing of the metal gate.

Kiefer was outside the cell.

Ryner was inside the cell.

“...This is...”

Without any sense of tension and with a normal look, Ryner stared at the confused Kiefer.

“Congratulations on your release, Kiefer.”

“Ah? Re...lease?”

Kiefer was stunned, and Ryner seemed to find it interesting as he said to her,

“And congrats to me for being locked up. Now I finally found a place where I can take naps without worrying about intruding on others. And there’s free provision of 3 meals a day here.”

On hearing that, the prison warden chuckled.

“I say. Only a weirdo like you would think this way.”

Kiefer gave a look of disbelief at these two people,

“Wa, wait a minute! What’s going on? Why am I released? Why is Ryner...”

The warden interrupted her,

“Ah, it’s like this...according to this official document and investigation report, Ryner Lute was willing to enter jail, and in return, he requested to free Kiefer Knolles. Eh, Ryner, are you so savage to be able to haggle with the army? What in the world did you do? That part about taking too many naps was just a hoax, right?”

“I’m telling you the truth.”

“You liar! Oh well. It’ll be a long time here anyway. I’ll clarify with you slowly then.”

“How troublesome...”

Ryner said such casual words and didn’t look like someone who was being locked in at all. Kiefer went to him.

But because of the bars, she couldn’t get further.

She said with a trembling voice,

“Wh, why...why are you willing to do this for me, Ryner...? Why did you have to take care of me like that? I...I betrayed Tai, Tony, Fualu...I got them killed...”

“You’re wrong.”

Ryner stared at Kiefer with a sleepy expression and said,

“The ones who killed weren’t humans. They’re monsters, Kiefer. War is a monster. A country’s a monster. Desire is a monster, and I too...”

Ryner paused once he spoke till here, and then smiled at Kiefer,

“But you’re a human, Kiefer. You don’t have to worry so much. Do you understand? Then, let’s just treat this as the king of the kingdom of afternoon naps having arrived. You should do your best outside too, Kie...UWAH!?”

Immediately, Kiefer reached her hands through the gaps between the bars and grabbed Ryner by the collar before pulling him over. Though his face managed to avoid the metal bars at the last second and prevented the head-on collision...

Kiefer’s arms were wrapped around Ryner’s neck.

“Kiefer!? It hurts to have my face pressed between the bars...mu.”

While speaking, Ryner’s mouth was covered by Kiefer.

Her own mouth.



Of course, Ryner couldn't say anything.

“.....”

It was a long moment of silence.

The warden whistled.

After a while, Kiefer let go of her strength, and both of them pulled away.

As it happened too quickly, Ryner was dumbfounded and couldn't say anything.

Kiefer stared at Ryner with teary eyes.

“Now I know why I like you, Ryner. I thought that it's because you lack the will and enthusiasm, so I thought that I didn't need to be wary about you...I thought that it's because of you that I felt safe...that's what I thought. But I was wrong. In fact, you're a kind and understanding person. You're stronger than anyone else. So...so, you're not a monster too. I assure you. If you dare call yourself a monster again, I won't forgive you for that.”

Kiefer rattled off a long series of words, and yet Ryner couldn't respond.

“You're no monster, Ryner. At least I don't think you're a monster. I'll live on. Thank you, Ryner. And also...I'll definitely...”

She stopped talking here, then shook her head and prompted the prison warden to lead her to the exit. At this moment, Kiefer's eyes lost all the despair she had.

Her face was full of determination.

“I'm going.”

And thus, the prison warden may or may not have grasped the entire situation as he just looked like he saw a good show as he nodded his head and led Kiefer away.

Ryner continued to remain silent, until he couldn't see either of them. Then...

“Haa...I was kissed the moment I wanted to exhale...I nearly thought I was going to die there...”

He still had his lifeless expression on. It's hard to tell whether these were his real thoughts...

Part 5

After that, a few days later,

“Oi! Uncle warden! Come over for a while!”

A lazy voice still rang inside the prison cell.

On hearing the voice, the warden came over with a tired look.

“I say...just do whatever you want. Don’t call me every single day! If there’s something, just clear it all at one go! And whenever I look for you for something, you’re sleeping...”

“What? You’re the one who said that I could call you at any time.”

“There’s a limit to everything! And you often ask for such ridiculous requests, like that super-large pillow or 5 meals a day.”

“Oh yeah, as for what I want today.”

On hearing that, the warden sighed.

“Something again...say it. What is it today?”

“I want paper and a pencil. Also, isn’t there a school called the Roland Empire Royal Military Institute? I want to borrow books from the library over there.”

“Books? I can do so. I can help out with such minor things.”

“Really? Great! I tried investigating before, but I felt that it was troublesome, so I gave up. But now that I’m really too bored, I was thinking that maybe I can try this out.”

“Ah, never mind! I know you’re bluffing yourself. Just say what kind of book you want to borrow.”

“It isn’t just one, you know?”

“Well, I can borrow some books for you. Just say it. I told my kid that I will

come back early to play with her.

“Oh...you have kids, uncle?”

“Un. 7 years old. She’s at her cutest now...”

“Un~”

On hearing that, Ryner sat down on the floor, folded his arms and said,

“I say, uncle.”

“What?”

“You don’t wish for that kid to go and fight, right?”

On hearing that, the prison warden twitched his eyebrows.

“Of course. Which parent would allow their children to enter the battlefield? War...haa, 7 years ago, I was on the battlefield...that was the worst...my best friend and comrades all died...so...when the higher ups offered to upgrade me to a squad captain, I refused, and came here to become a sentry soldier of sorts. But I didn’t regret it at all. During that time, I had my kid...un, war isn’t to be fought by humans.”

Ryner heard the warden’s words and nodded his head.

“Didn’t I say it? No one likes to fight wars~ alright, looks like I have to ask you to work harder, uncle warden. Then, please help me borrow 10 books. They’re all really heavy. I’ll leave it to you then.”

“Haa? What sort of logic is that? Even if you didn’t come up with such ridiculous logic, I would have gone to help you borrow these books. You’re the only one I can talk with in my work place.”

“I’ll leave it to you then, uncle.”

“Oh yeah, what sort of book do you want?”

“That’s why I want to borrow paper and pencil from you. Can you remember all 10 of them? These books have very long names, you know?”

On hearing this, the warden frowned.

“Hold on a moment then. I’ll go get some papers and pencils now. Really,

even if I'm not helping you recently, I had to come home late and get told off by my wife..."

Ryner didn't look like someone who was asking as he just laid down on the ground and waved at the warden who was grumbling and leaving.

"I'll leave it to you then~"

And then he stretched his back.

"That's right...War isn't something nice....Ahh...looks like I have to investigate that thing again..."

Recently, Ryner's got used to life inside a cell, and he had more and more chances to talk to himself.

"My personality really isn't suited to work hard...well, what to do..."

At this moment,

He got up.

He looked around, and obviously there wasn't anyone around. All he saw were stone cold walls and bars.

At first, he felt that prisoners who were all locked in separate cells were a luxurious thing. But...according to the warden, any prisoner who was locked up for a week without being able to talk to anyone, move or remained in the empty space of the cell that didn't change would become tame within a week no matter how noisy they were. After being locked up for a week, all the inmates seemed to have...

Gone crazy.

In this place that was full of despair and madness, Ryner folded his arms and moaned,

"U~n, a month...really, has it been a month? Getting out from here seems to be a really small and tiny hope of luxury...well, since I have lots of time, I'll just take my time with my investigation. But before that..."

He shut his mouth and continued to lie down like usual.

"Just let me take a nap first..."

After saying that, he closed his eyes.

Part 6

Many people went their separate ways just like that.

People would lose many things. However, time still proceeded.

Don't you feel that it's a sad thing?

The days worth remembering were soon gone.

Even if we can't be certain about whether the new things will be better than the old...

The wheel of time will continue to move...

Everyone is still being forced to move forward.

But even so, at least we still wish for a better future...

Those with ambition.

Those who remained where they were.

Those who looked at the past.

And those who only know how to take afternoon naps...?

There're still lots of different people in this world

Anyway—

Time continued to tick on slowly but surely, by minutes, by seconds.

Part 7

During the first year, nobody knew that a change had happened. They only knew that an enemy country was gone. Everyone was feeling as delighted as if it were a New Year celebration.

But it was a little different in the second year. The king once again declared that they were going to war against the Nelpha Empire. During this time, a revolution took its chance and rose. Because of the residents' intent, the king was forced to abdicate the throne, and a new king was born. The process of this revolution was completely unimaginable. Soon after, nobles started to disappear one after another, and this year could be said to be one having the most drastic change.

However, Ryner, who was locked inside jail, couldn't tell what was going on outside...

Just like that, 2 years passed.

In that place, sunlight couldn't enter.

The light of day couldn't enter, and neither could moonlight.

Thus, if one stayed here for a long time, it's unlikely that he would differentiate night from day.

This should be something painful. This pain couldn't be imagined by others.

However...

Let's not talk about this for now. Right now, it was midnight.

No, if it wasn't midnight, he wouldn't be here in such a place...

"..."

He narrowed his eyes and looked forward.

At the narrow space between the stone walls and the metal bars.

This cramped space was thoroughly filled with books and documents. The stacks of books filled up the floor, and the stone floor almost couldn't be seen.

No matter how one would try to describe it nicely, this place couldn't be called neat.

This was a place that didn't match his high-class standing. If those people around him saw this, they would definitely be shocked by this.

However...

He didn't bother about this.

That's because he knew that the value of humans weren't decided by such trivial things.

Recently, people had been saying that he liked some strange things.

Maybe.

Even after looking at such a messy place, his lips continued to show a smile that wouldn't disappear...

He reached his hand out.

Right in the middle of the bars that were dirtied by rust.

Even after dirtying that seemingly simple black-based clothing, which only a certain group of people with the eye for it could tell was clothing of high class, that thing had no value to him.

Just like that, he grabbed a stack of documents in the mess...

And glanced through it.

"I see."

He seemed to be really impressed as he muttered,

"Is this the path you choose?"

He used the term 'you' to call him.

However, it seemed there wasn't anyone inside. One could only see a large number of books and documents written neatly.

However, he seemed to be talking to someone as he continued.

“...I thought that you would continue to take naps when you were hiding here. Looks like I was here...I worked hard and came all the way here, and yet... you’re hiding here and enjoying yourself. I really can’t accept this difference. I won’t allow myself to be the only one worrying about everything and anything. You’re my personnel. I’m going to make use of you.”

As he said up to this point, he smirked,

“Whether you like it or not.”

“...”

There was still no response...

However, he nodded away in a satisfied manner and turned his back on the bars.

And he left.

Part 8

The next day.

That cramped space was just like yesterday.

The books that were messily stacked up and the documents caused the entire place to be buried.

And from the pile of books...

“A...u...uu...uu.” A moan rang in a ridiculous manner,

“Uwa...aaa...ahh...”

At this moment,

“UWAHHH!!?”

A young man’s voice rang as he got up from the pile of books.

His shoulders were moving up and down as he continued to pant and look shocked.

“Haa haa...that was bad...I fell asleep while buried under the books and nearly suffocated there...”

The man gave a serious expression as he said such useless words.

He had black hair that was disheveled due to sleep and a pair of lifeless eyes.

He was Ryner Lute.

It’s been 2 years already, and yet the lack of will he showed never changed at all...

Let’s not mention whether this is good or bad for now. Ryner looked like he just had a good sleep as he stretched his back.

“Fuwaaa. Still not enough sleep...let’s sleep some more...”

After saying that, he laid down again.

While remaining in this position, he continued to flip the pages of the book in front of him.

“I researched this book thoroughly too. A little sick of it...oh well, let’s have breakfast first. Then I’ll think of what to research on next...”

After saying that, he tossed the books aside and continued to sort his thoughts out. He probably thought that it was already sorted as he waited for breakfast to come...

Having spent 2 years building the body clock inside him, he was able to grasp the correct moment when it’s time to eat, and he knew that it was breakfast.

“Who knows what it is today...that meal yesterday was bad. If today’s worse than yesterday, I might create an uproar...”

He continued to enjoy such humble expectations as he brought his face to the bars and waited for the warden to bring him breakfast.

“Still not here yet...I’m going to sleep if he doesn’t show up...”

And—

Just as expected, he heard footsteps.

It was the footsteps of the warden who came to serve breakfast.

Ryner stood up,

“Morning, uncle!”

He said hello to the warden who he was acquainted with for 2 years. Both of them would continue to chatter, and the uncle would bring what he need. This was a daily thing already. However...

“...”

There was no response.

Ryner tilted his head in a puzzled manner.

“Oi, uncle. What’s wrong? Why so lethargic? Did you just quarrel with your wife again?”

“ ... ”

There was still no response.

Ryner felt suspicious and peered through the bars and onto the corridor. That familiar warden was trudging slowly and moving over here.

However, he just looked weird. He lowered his head slightly, and looked really lethargic.

No, that wasn't just it. The warden wasn't holding onto breakfast which he would normally be holding and sending over.

Seeing this, Ryner tilted his head in a puzzled manner and again sat on the floor, or rather, the books.

“What the heck?”

Ryner looked completely lost. This time, it took a slightly longer time for the warden to walk this short distance before standing in front of Ryner.

“What's with you today, uncle? What happened?”

However, the warden wasn't looking at Ryner at all, and even looked like he was deliberately looking away.

This action puzzled Ryner even more, and he continued to remain dazed and silent. If he had no interest, it would be troublesome to find something to talk about...he thought about these things that lacked will.

“ ... ”

The warden didn't speak.

“ ... ”

Ryner didn't speak too.

“.....uu.”

“.....Uwah, I really want to sleep now...”

“.....ARGH!”

In this battle of silence, the one who lost was the warden. For some reason, he said with an intense tone,

“Why aren’t you talking!? It’s really uncomfortable when you don’t say anything like that!”

“What? Who asked you not to talk, uncle? I thought that you wouldn’t dare to talk much because someone introduced your daughter to a blind date and made you feel unhappy!”

“WHAT NONSENSE! DON’T YOU KNOW THAT MY DAUGHTER’S ONLY 7!?”

Ryner then smirked.

“10 year olds now are really amazing, uncle. Don’t you know that?”

“WH WHA, WHAT, AMAZING!? WHAT DO YOU MEAN BY THAT? OUR, OUR DAUGHTER DEFINITELY WON’T!”

“That’s what every parent says.”

“THAT’S NOT WHAT I’M SAYING!”

Once the warden said that, his expression darkened.

“That’s not it...not this...”

“Well...why do you look so downcast? What happened? Oh yeah, what happened to my breakfast..?”

That was Ryner’s main point.

But the warden ignored him.

“It’s been two years... since you came here...”

The warden said, and for some reason, was actually looking at Ryner with teary eyes.

“Uu...wh, why are you looking at me like this...I, I don’t have such interest, you know...?”

He felt a dangerous presence and inadvertently backed away...

However, the warden didn’t care about Ryner’s ridiculous action. He took the key and opened the gate of the cell.

“Thinking about it, you’re the only one I could talk to in this workplace...”

He said as he walked into the cell.

On seeing this, Ryner said,

“No, no way!? Wait wait! Calm down first, uncle! Think through this calmly! You have a wife and a cute daughter...don't do this! GYAAH!! SOMEONE'S GOING TO RAPE ME!!”

Ryner shouted without any restraint, but on seeing the sad expression on the warden's face, he went silent.

He felt uninterested as he pressed against that disheveled hair.

“What's the matter, uncle? Feeling down today? It's boring for me to act alone like this. Hm? What's wrong? What happened today?”

On hearing that, the warden looked hurt as he looked away from Ryner.

“...I didn't want to say it...”

He stopped at this point.

He realized it.

“Is that so? Don't worry. It's alright if you don't want to say it.”

“...”

The warden went silent again.

But Ryner still continued,

“It's about that, right? My death sentence has been decided already, isn't it? Mine.”

Ryner merely said that in a casual tone.

The warden lifted his face and looked at Ryner's face...and saw that even as he said this, his face was still sleepy and dazed, and then frowned.

But Ryner said with an energetic voice,

“I say, uncle. Can I ask you something?”

“...What is it?”

“Can I, run away? Didn't we say before...that I shouldn't die easily. If I can try hard to live on...”

“Tha, that...”

The warden minced his words, and then...

“I...”

Before he finished, Ryner waved his hand and interrupted the warden.

“Un, yes, yes, I got it. That’s right. If I run away now, it’ll bring you trouble. And you have your beloved wife and daughter. I know, I know. If I want to run, I’ll run when you aren’t around. That’s right. When will my execution commence?”

“Well.....tomorrow...”

“So early!?”

Ryner couldn’t help but scream out. No one could really blame him anyway. It’s likely that nobody wouldn’t scream on hearing such news...

The warden seemed to be trying to explain himself as he said,

“It was too sudden. This notice came so early in the morning...”

“Ah, it’s alright. I know it’s not your fault, uncle. But...tomorrow...that’s rather quick...un? What should I do?”

“As for the entire schedule for today, the official documents stated them clearly, so you just have to follow me, and settle them. Well, it seemed that they want you to enjoy some luxuries before your death...”

“Oh...luxuries.”

“Un. A bath for you first, and then some grooming, and then some suitable clothing for you, and then eating at a high class restaurant...”

“Ah? What’s this anyway? Is this something a country does for a death row convict that’s about to die?”

“Nope...”

This time, the warden looked even more depressed.

“This is different from usual. For some reason, the king seemed like he wanted to witness your execution...so, a few people said that since you have to

be in front of the king, you have to be dressed up suitably even if you're a death row convict...you'll be handed over to the king's subordinate tomorrow..."

Ryner then understood everything.

I see...

So the king is really scared of the 'Alpha stigma'.

And he had to witness me being killed or else he wouldn't be able to sleep...

Maybe that's the reason?

"Fu~n. In that case, my life as a pet is over already, I guess?"

"...Then, shall we go?"

On hearing the warden's words, Ryner panicked,

"Ah, ah, hold on a moment. Can I take back the research report I investigated up till now?"

But the warden still gave a depressed look as he said,

"That won't do. The official document stated that you're not allowed to bring anything out..."

"Man, really? Please! Don't just see me as a carefree guy. I'm rather serious too...alright? Just let smuggle it out..."

"I said no. And I'm not the only one inside..."

As the warden said this, he waved his arm, and several sturdy looking men stepped forward.

The men stared at Ryner.

"Is this guy the death row convict?"

"Looks skinny and frail. Doesn't look like someone amazing anyway."

"Why don't we just kill such a person immediately?"

Everyone started to yap away.

On hearing this, Ryner dejectedly lowered his head.

"Haa...I know. I have to give up on these reports, right..."

“Sorry.”

“Why? I know it’s not your problem, uncle~”

“Shall we go?”

“Un.”

Thus, both of them trudged on and started to move forward.

Those muscular men were following from behind.

Ryner saw everything and gave a lost expression as his mind continued to think.

His execution was tomorrow.

But he couldn’t run away when the uncle warden is working...

In other words, he had to run away from those extraordinary people, the subordinates of the king tomorrow.

“Haa...”

That was rather easy to him.

In fact, if he really wanted to run away, even with 5 or 6 powerful mage knights, he had the belief that he could run away easily.

He was forced to learn this ability in that orphanage.

And besides, these eyes were...

Thus, Ryner yawned as he patted the warden on the shoulder.

“I say, uncle. Don’t show such an unhappy look. Just settle this once and for all today. Did you say a bath just now? How is it like? You said a luxurious bath... is there a pillow provided as well?”

His voice was as carefree as ever.

That luxurious time was really so short that it was over like the blink of an eye...

Part 9

The next day.

After leaving the abnormally luxurious hotel yesterday, Ryner narrowed his eyes and looked up at the sky.

The sunlight shone down on him from the sky.

The weather was really too good, and he couldn't help but grumble,

"Isn't this~ a warm sunlight too suited to carry out executions~"

These words made the warden, who was behind him, grimace.

Ryner gave a wry smile to him as he continued to move his limbs and stretch his back before grooming himself.

After a while, he will be moving his limbs that he hadn't moved for 2 years. He had to face off against direct subordinates of the king, but he hoped to escape.

If he couldn't even do such a small thing...

"Hn, un, heh~ this clothing looks rather extravagant, but kinda easy to move in."

The warden handed Ryner some strange clothing yesterday, and he flipped the cloth that reached his waist.

Uu, this clothing couldn't be called normal clothing, could it? It was a strange medieval armor that had a white helmet with blue ropes.

This was a unique battle armor given to the mage knights of Roland.

It was easy to move in, and highly durable in defensive ability.

Ryner really couldn't understand why this would be given to a death row convict...anyway, since this was given, perhaps he should accept this happily? He put on the clothing obediently.

No matter what, it looked like there would be a battle...

At that time, this battle outfit would come in handy.

“But...”

Ryner said. He yawned. No, he’s always yawning...

He yawned loudly again.

“Fuu...this is the first time I’m sleeping on such a high class bed ever since I was born. I nearly couldn’t sleep well.”

On hearing Ryner’s rambling, the warden said,

“Liar! Didn’t you sleep earlier than me? You know that you’re about to get to the guillotine the next day and yet you’re able to sleep so soundly...I couldn’t sleep at all!”

“Oh? Uncle, why couldn’t you sleep?”

“You...that’s because...”

After saying that, the warden gave a depressed look. Ryner smiled at him and said,

“Ah, I got it, I got it. I’m about to die. This is something big...”

“You...don’t say something like this so easily...”

The warden just looked stunned, and Ryner shrugged his shoulders.

“Haa, don’t look at me like this. I’m rather bold too. Maybe I’m that kind of person people say who don’t fear death?”

In fact, he had no intention of dying at all...

On hearing Ryner say this, for some reason, the warden seemed amazed as he nodded his head,

“I, feel that it’s an honorable thing, to be friends with you.”

“Eh? Ah...re, really? Ah,ahaha!”

On hearing this, Ryner was really moved as he couldn’t help but give a dry laugh.

Both of them were talking so easily, and this would be the last time.

As time passed, the warden's words reduced, and a heavy bitter atmosphere permeated between the duo.

Soon, the time had finally come...

Under the prompting of the warden, Ryner was brought to the palace where the king lived in.

The warden stopped,

"...I have to hand you over to the direct subordinates of the king."

"Uu."

Ryner nodded his head and looked around.

He arrived on the plaza of the beautiful palace.

And waiting for him over there was...

Unexpectedly, there was a woman there.

From the way he was timidly moving, he probably thought that the king would send in a lot more subordinates to kill him.

But unexpectedly, there was a lady over there...

On seeing this, the warden couldn't help but mutter,

"A lady...? And an unbelievable beauty at that too..."

Yes, that lady had an unbelievably beautiful face.

She had bright blond hair, an extremely pretty face that would make anyone gasp. The icy cold ices and the leather hide armor that looked very easily to move in wrapped around her slender body.

Hidden under her luxurious and slender thin arms, at her waist was a longsword that could be for decoration.

For some reason, such a beauty gave an icy death-like glare as she looked over.

"Hn. That stupid face of yours. Are you the criminal called Ryner?"

She said that with an unrestrained tone.

However,

“.....”

No one answered. They couldn't answer.

She was one heck of a beauty, so beautiful that one would forget to answer as they all went silent.

The warden and the trio who followed them throughout the day were all dumbfounded.

Ryner was the only one with sleepy eyes as he looked around in a dazed manner to see where he could escape later.

If there's a need to say who the weirdo was, it would be Ryner. Such a bewitching lady was right in front of him, and he still remained unmoved.

The lady spoke.

She said with a really deep voice,

“It's been tough on everyone. I'll handle the rest. You people can head back.”

The trio who seemed to be slow-witted finally reacted.

“Uu, this...but, how can we let a female do such a dangerous job...”

However...

“I'll say it again. Scram.”

The lady was merciless.

The trio couldn't hide the shock within their hearts as they hurriedly fled. And the warden...

“Then, Ryner. We'll say our goodbyes...”

However, Ryner merely nodded his head in response as if he was just answering back.

“Ah, that's right. You had been taking care of me all this time, uncle. Bye then.”

“Bye?...Ah, that’s right. I’ll find you when I die.”

“O, okay. Then...”

Ryner’s casual attitude seemed to have caused the warden to be mistaken as he was immediately reduced to tears.

“...Ryner, you brat, you often empathized with me...I understand. I don’t understand how to face such a sad farewell...bye!”

After saying that, the warden immediately ran away.

Ryner watched his back leave—

And faced this abnormally emotionless looking lady.

He stared at the girl with loose eyes.

“Oi, pretty girl!”

“What, sex maniac.”

“Haa...?”

The lady’s sudden response caused Ryner to be taken aback and unable to talk.

“Well...there was a long moment of silence.”

And afterwards, Ryner recollected his thoughts.

“...Then, if possible, can I understand why you’re calling me a sex maniac...?”

The lady gave a matter-of-fact expression and said,

“Your face.”

“Ah!?”

“And your history. I’ve heard all about you.”

“Wait, what do you mean by history!?”

“You have no need to know.”

The lady was as cold as ever.

Un~

This would be tough to handle...

On a certain sense, Ryner was overwhelmed by the lady's presence. However, he knew that it would be pointless to merely answer her. Thus, he took action.

Though his face looked completely uninterested, he slowly raised his hand.

"Ah~ that's right, sorry, there's something I'd like to ask you."

"?"

The lady quickly scanned Ryner's movements, but one couldn't see that she was on high alert.

On seeing this, Ryner was grinning inside.

"Sorry, I'd like you to let go of me."

Before his finished speaking, Ryner's hand danced in the air. He drew a magic array at an amazing speed.

Immediately,

No, the magic array was completed faster than that.

The spell was immediately completed.

"What I seek is lightning...."

Ryner's movements didn't cause the lady's expression to change. She stared at Ryner's actions and muttered, "Oh, are you trying to kill me?"

Ryner ignored her and continued to chant.

"Izuchi."

Immediately, a strong ray of light appeared and came out from the center of the magic array Ryner drew...

It was locked onto the lady.

".....eh?"

Ryner immediately let out a cry of surprise.

Because he really couldn't understand what happened in front of him...

Just when he was dazed by the blurred afterimage of the lady.

SWOOSH!

The longsword that was drawn from who-knew-when came swinging up and closed in on Ryner's chin.

"UWAH!?"

Immediately, Ryner's body bent backwards as he was barely able to dodge the blade itself. However, the longsword of the lady slashed down the center of the magic array Ryner drew and absorbed the lightning that was gathered at the center of the magic array. Another slash came back as the sword went straight down.

"...Ugh!?"

Ryner was so shocked that he couldn't even say anything. He backed away, leapt aside and escaped.

After that.

Swoosh.

With an unexpected strange sound he never heard before, the lady's sword let out an electric strike and blew a large hole where Ryner was.

On seeing this...

".....No, way..."

He couldn't help but mutter.

The lady's mobility was really unbelievable.

It was too quick.

The lady slashed the electric strike, and before she got hit by it, she released the light.

Normal people couldn't do this. And she was swinging a longsword...

Ryner gave a look as if what happened in front of him never happened before as he stared at the lady with the beautiful blond hair separated on her forehead.

"Don't tell me you're that king's direct subordinate..."

He groaned.

It could be said that it was a miracle that he dodged that lady's attack. No, maybe she held back just before she was about to take action...

Ryner would have been killed if she didn't destroy the magic array and tried to kill him...

"That's not good...looks like I may be killed if I don't do this seriously..."

At this moment, the woman stared at Ryner.

"Oh? Are you saying that you weren't using your full strength?"

"Uu, about 70%?"

"Uu...I see. Is this the reason why that guy wanted you?"

"Hm? That guy?"

"Nothing. In that case, I have to be a little more serious."

After saying that, the lady sheathed her sword, and then had her hand on her scabbard before saying,

"Here I go!"

"Ah! Wha!? Wait! Speaking of which, I'm a little bothered here!?"

"? What do you mean by that?"

"You're a little despicable there you know. If I want to fight seriously, I have to get ready properly first, right? Who would just hack away when they say so? No no!"

"..Uu, so?"

"Wait a sec. I hate troublesome things, but let me endure this for now and try my best to fight. Watch me."

After saying that, Ryner started drawing words of light in the air. That was the spell the Estabul magic knights used in that battle before, and Ryner duplicated it.

Soon, the words were all finished.

"I offer the contracted words, letting the slumbering malicious spirits dwell

within.”

Immediately,

Ryner’s body seemed to be glowing.

On seeing this, he nodded his head.

“Alright, I’m ready. Let’s go!”

“...”

Just like that, the battle continued,

Ryner’s movements,

Were faster.

He continued to pull his distance away from the lady who was rushing forward and drew magic arrays at unbelievable speeds...

The lady witnessed this.

“Hm.”

She merely made a little sound before accelerating forward.

“WAH...!?”

On seeing this, Ryner couldn’t help but cry out in shock as he stopped his hand movements.

“No, no way!?”

Logically, Ryner’s speed was accelerated due to magic. The magic knights of Estabul used this power to be hailed as death gods on the battlefield.

However, this woman...

Her speed was still faster than this speed that was accelerated through magic...

At this moment, Ryner suddenly realized.

I see. This lady seemed to be using some form of magic. Some spell that allows her body to accelerate rapidly.

A spell that’s of a higher level than the spells the magic knights of Estabul

used...

In that case...

Ryner stared at the lady and used his eyes, the eyes with the pentacles. He could analyze and use any spell.

Yes. Any spell...

His pentacle continued to stare at the lady as he tried hard to analyze...

The structure, formation, activation manner, power, effect.

After a quick processing and evaluation, he found out,

“...”

This lady wasn't using any spells at all!

“Ah!? Nobody could possibly move this fast without using any magic...!?”

Immediately,

The sharp sword attacks that soon caught up to Ryner were waiting to slice the top of his head in half.

SWOOSH!

“Ugh!”

Ryner was barely able to finish a magic array he half-completed before and fought against the lady.



“What I seek is water, Misumi.”

Thus, the compressed liquid gathered at the magic array Ryner finished before dispersing to form a torrent that was released at the lady.

But the lady responded with an absolutely calm manner.

She immediately changed her target from Ryner to the ground, stabbed her sword into it, and used her sword as a fulcrum and leapt in the air...

It was a graceful action.

The lady's body danced above the water droplets, rolled in mid-air and leapt into Ryner.

Ryner immediately fell backwards and couldn't move. The lady's blade was resting at his neck.

“Un. Can we end now?”

“.....Uu...ah~un.”

Ryner raised both hands to surrender.

It was an amazing strength.

Absolutely inhuman...

However, the lady remained silent as she kept her sword at Ryner's neck.

She didn't kill Ryner, but didn't sheath it either.

Having admitting defeat easily, Ryner stared at the lady with lifeless eyes. He hadn't struggled this much for a long time, and now he's starting to feel that everything was too troublesome again.

If nothing can be changed even after working so hard, forget about it. He thought deep inside...

At this moment,

The lady asked with an emotionless voice like before,

“You held back just now, didn't you?”

“Ah? What makes you think that way?”

“That spell just now...if you didn’t use a water spell, but a fire spell, which could have caused a wide area of damage, you could have caught me. Since you could execute that level of movement, you could have made that immediate decision, right? But you...why did you use it?”

“Un~, that’s because if I did so, you could have died. Also, if your beautiful face got scarred, I’ll be really guilty about burning your face like that...it’s rare to see such a beauty.”

Ryner gave a tired look as he simply answered.

And thus,

“...”

The lady stared at Ryner and went silent for a while.

And then, it’s unknown what she was thinking as she sheathed her sword and nodded to herself before saying, “Oh, I see. So this beautiful look of mine is great enough to destroy the world, causing you, a sex-crazed maniac to often think about such detrimental things in battle, and thus unable to make a suitable decision...so that’s how it is.”

She gave a serious expression as she concluded.

Ryner couldn’t answer back immediately, and then...

“.....Ah? Destroy the world...? You...”

However, the lady looked like she completely ignored him as she got up.

“Stand up. It’s time to leave. The king’s waiting for you.”

“What? I’ll run away if I want to. Who in the world would gladly accept an execution...”

“Stay behind if you want to, but you’ll definitely regret it severely later.”

The lady left behind these malicious words and quickly left.

“Haa...”

On hearing this, Ryner sighed reluctantly.

He knew that this was a trap. It will be over if he believed her. If he did, he will

end up having to meet the king.

Ryner muttered to himself,

“Ryner, don’t believe it. Now’s the best chance. You’ll be executed if you don’t run away.”

But the conclusion was,

“...Argh! I don’t know about you! Wait, oi! You’re really despicable! Why will I regret it!? I’ll definitely run away if you didn’t say such words!”

One would really suspect whether the person who said such ridiculous words really intending to run away.

This was a really important question, but the lady turned back and said to Ryner,

“A regret’s a regret. If you want to run away like that, I’ll spread the unknown past I heard about you from the king out.”

“...The past nobody knows of? What is that? I don’t remember doing anything that I don’t want others to know of...”

At this moment, the lady gave a mocking chuckle as she interrupted Ryner.

“Fufu, is that so? You already liked older women when you were six. If you find that a ‘lady killer’ isn’t an embarrassing past for you, maybe it’s not something to be scared of, is it? Then, I’m going. You can decide what you want then.”

Once the lady said that, she took large strides towards the palace and disappeared. Ryner was stunned as he watched her leave.

His mind continued to process what the lady just said.

Lady killer. The mature woman he liked when he was six.

“...”

Such a memorable saying.

He shouldn’t have another chance of hearing that again.

But now, right in front of him...

And just at the moment he was about to be executed he heard these words again.

What's going on? Exactly what's going on?

He desperately tried to think, and there was only one conclusion he could come up with.

The only one who would say such things and is still alive was...

"...No way? Is it like that? What's going on? Oi, ho, hold on!"

And Ryner ran after the lady.

In front.

It should be...the place the king of this country resided in.

Prologue II -still, they seek an answer for living

It was a really tall ceiling that couldn't be described.

And there were huge round pillars that were supporting the ceiling and decorated as much as possible.

That was considered to be the largest building in the Roland Empire, the most glamorous...and to be honest, the building with the most money spent on.

It's the residence of the king of the Roland Empire...

Right now, everything here belongs to Sion Astal. However, to him, he felt that spending money on such things was already a waste...

According to the old men who surrounded him, the flashy appearance over here was an important way of showing the king's dignity and honor.

"Flashy appearance of this grandeur stage...how stupid."

He grumbled as he sat on the throne.

Such grandeur couldn't save anyone. A flashy appearance couldn't save the people. He knew this more than anyone. The people couldn't even get what they want. Could anyone trust their king after seeing him deliberately show off his dignity and grandeur?

It was too laughable.

It's a sin to be impotent for a person whose standing is above the people.

It's a sin not to understand the pain of the people.

However, as he stood on this seat, he didn't see anyone capable.

"Is this...the king's..."

Sion narrowed his eyes.

He had to change.

He had to change everything.

That's what he thought. Once he felt that he arrived at the end, he finally realized that the end was the beginning of everything.

A sluggish country.

An incompetent king and nobility, and a country on a long-term decline because of meaningless war.

This country had to change from the bottom up...

That's what he thought.

However...

His eyes fell onto a stack of paper he was holding in his hands, and he smiled.

It was a report.

The crumpled papers were all fully filled with words that weren't really easy to read. There was a lot of information in the stack of paper Sion was holding, but that was only a small portion.

If one were to count them all and read through all of these without any distractions, it would likely take a few days...

Sion ordered the report to be taken from the prison yesterday, and then went to analyze it with 5 scholars.

Excluding the parts he read and the parts the few scholars themselves were reading, he had more or less admitted to grasping the basic concept of it.

And the content itself...

Was really amazing.

Someone would actually think about this.

Something really amazing...

Only 2 years were spent, and he managed to investigate such a large amount

of information and even make a conclusion.

The one who wrote this report...

Didn't only intend to change the country, but to change the world.

"I...already felt that managing a country alone was tiring...such an amazing guy."

Sion gave a wry smile.

And also, the title of this report was,

'How to create a kingdom of afternoon naps?'

It was really a funny title. The scholars themselves just felt weak when they saw it, but when Sion saw it, "Haha. That's just like what that guy would do."

He laughed heartily.

Someone would actually think of this without hesitation, and Sion had never thought of this before.

That's what made him delighted.

So called comrades...are supposed to be like this. No, a country itself is supposed to be like this. No matter what ideals we have, what kind of people we are, we shouldn't be treated differently. We should all be treated equally...

The basic content of the report was as such:

Ever since long ago, there were many people who had enough power to change the world, and were called demon lords or devils, evil people. These demon lords had complete magic circuits and had power that far exceeded human imagination. Even battalions made of powerful mages or soldiers couldn't fight these real monsters called demon lords. Thus, this world would face a crisis of being destroyed by these so-called demon lords. However, this time, legends of how human warriors, like legends and knights of the light that had greater battle prowess than these demon lords caused them to be destroyed. Now, the problem was, who were these legends? While we set aside all these debates about whether these so-called demon lords or legends really existed...where do all these 'humans' with monstrous power come from? If the records of history

books were all real, these legends could easily eliminate these powerful monsters of magic who in turn had killed hundreds of powerful mages easily. These legends, who were they? The world is scattered with legends of such legends. Even though these legends are hardly viewed as important today, however...people have found the weapons these legends used, and their locations were recorded. Regrettably, the secret documents that recorded these demon lords' mysterious power never saw the light of day...even so, even if we can't find these monsters, if we can find the remains of these powerful legends, can't we use them as powerful weapons? At the same time, as for whether these demon lords or legends really existed...the 'Alpha Stigma' has provided an explanation. Nobody knows whether that's an evil thing or something of the legend's ability. However...the power that far exceeded expectations did exist. In that case, should there be other unique powers around? There's immeasurable value in searching for such powers. A strong power can be used in a certain way and end wars before they start. This report illustrates the locations of these heroes, a detailed explanation of each legend and also a map which shows where the hero relics may be resting.

That's basically the rough gist of the report.

Some may feel that the content here was completely laughable. Those who never witnessed the true power of the "Alpha Stigma" may find this report to be a child's fairytale story.

No, even Sion, who witnessed the power of the 'Alpha Stigma' felt that such a report was merely a dream.

However...

Sion looked at the first page of the report which he had seen countless times.

The author of this report here had a lot of thoughts when he wrote this.

Sion felt that this report was interesting after seeing such words.

He felt that it was valuable.

Just when Sion was about to reminisce about those words,

He immediately felt someone's presence at this moment, and lifted his head.

He smiled and stood up,

“Ah, Ferris, you’re back? It’s been tough on you. How is it? Where is he?”

There was a beauty with long blond hair. Ferris Eris was standing in front of him.

He told her to look for this person who wrote this report. If he was useable, she was to bring him over.

And so...

Like usual, Ferris stared at Sion emotionlessly.

“That face looks rather dumb, and he just looks like he didn’t have enough sleep. I can’t even tell whether he had any fight in him or not.”

“Haha, didn’t I tell you? Then?”

“Un, even in a change in situation, he didn’t show any reaction at all, and lacked tension. I don’t know whether his danger processing ability was too weak or that he was too dull.”

“So?”

Sion smiled and asked.

On seeing such an expression from Sion, Ferris said with a somewhat unhappy tone,

“You’re really very irritating...you knew, didn’t you? He’s strong. I don’t think I will lose to him...but he’s the first one to threaten me other than my brother, and he held back before he attacked.”

“Is that so?”

On hearing that, Sion smiled.

He then looked away from Ferris and turned to face the large and tall man who came trudging in from behind with listless footsteps.

“You’re finally here. Welcome to my palace, Ryner.”

He said to the visitor.

On seeing the scene in front of him...

Ryner was so stunned that he was rooted to the spot.

He was a little suspicious at first.

He realized it from the moment he spoke to that lady with overwhelming ability, but...

Sion was sitting on the throne in front of him.

In other words, though he didn't know what happened, but...he should be the king, right?

In other words, he wasn't sentenced to death in the first place...

In other words, everything he did today after wasting so much effort was all wasted...

"Haa...I'm tired. Just let me sleep already. Good night~"

Ryner immediately wanted to run away from reality and lay down.

Isn't there any value in being shocked that his ex-ally became the king...?

"Oi oi! Don't sleep here. I'm the king after all."

"I DON'T CARE ALREADY! I JUST WANT TO SLEEP!"

"Really, are these words of yours even appropriate? If you continue uttering rubbish like that, I won't tell you about Kiefer."

"...Doesn't matter."

"She's dead."

"Ah!?"

Immediately, Ryner leapt up from the ground and glared at Sion.

"You..."

At this moment, Sion gave a mysterious smile.

"Fooled ya. Ahaha! Are you finally awake now?"

At this moment, Ryner swore deep inside that he will kill this guy one day.

Ah, let's not talk about this for now.

“...Fu, that’s right. You’re this kind of person anyway...spreading all sorts of baseless rumors like how I’m a lady killer and sorts...”

“Don’t be stupid. How can I become king if it’s not for someone like me?”

“This country’s going to be doomed soon with this guy as the king.”

“Hahaha! Maybe. Why don’t you be the king then?”

“Nope. It sounds troublesome. Oh yeah, how is it? What happened to Kiefer? You should know, right? I don’t know anything about her since I was locked up.”

“Un, shall I tell you?”

“Doesn’t matter. I won’t ask if you won’t say it.”

Ryner said. Sion shrugged his shoulders when he said that,

“I see. So I can’t control you like that...”

“Ah? Control? You!”

“Ahaha!”

Sion smiled back as he continued,

“Alright, I’ll tell you then. After leaving you in my care, Kiefer left Roland. She said that she wanted to journey through the countries. Maybe she wanted to see more of this world after going through the incident between Estabul and Roland?”

“Un~”

Ryner didn’t seem interested as he nodded his head. However, Sion merely chuckled as he saw this reaction...

Sion then continued,

“Well, the reason I brought you here today wasn’t to tell you this. Actually, I should say that I summoned you here to ask about this...”

Sion took a pile of papers that was originally placed on the throne. He waved it at Ryner, who seemed to have seen the pile of papers before somewhere.

“This is it. The thing you spent two years to investigate...”

“You took that thing!?”

Ryner couldn't help but shout out.

However, Sion ignored him.

"I personally feel that this is interesting. Relics of the legendary heroes? Amazing. To think that you could actually think of something like that."

"I say...don't just read other people's reports like that, you."

"I already read it."

"Return it to me."

"No can do. I'm the king, you know? When do I ever need to listen to your orders?"

On hearing Sion say this, Ryner couldn't help but say to the lady beside him,

"Wa, wa, didn't you just hear him say that? He took other people's things like that and even talked like that! This country's doomed with such a king."

And so, the lady who didn't show any expression until the end said,

"It's not like the king's bad personality showed now. Birds of a feather, they say."

"Are you talking about Sion and you?"

"I'm talking about the king and the sex maniac."

At this moment, Sion joined in the battle.

"What do you mean by that? I thought I'm the most normal one amongst the trio."

It seemed that the trio never heard of the saying 'the pot calling the kettle black'...

Sion continued,

"Anyway, I like this report. So, I'm going to make you search for the contents in here personally, Ryner. I want you to journey around the world to gather the things called the relics of the legendary heroes back."

"Ah!?"

On hearing that, Ryner cried out loudly,

“WHY ME!?”

But Sion ignored Ryner’s shouting as he continued,

“But I’m a little worried about your lackluster attitude, Ryner...so, Ferris, I want you to assist Ryner and escort him.”

Immediately,

“...”

The lady remained silent as she looked at Sion.

“You bastard...what do you want, king?”

One really couldn’t tell that she was treating the king like a king...

Anyway, the two people who were entrusted with the task were unhappy.

Ryner said,

“Sion, don’t just make decisions on your own. I made that report because I had too much time. I did it, but I just want to let my dreams expand for life and treat it as an interest once I age.”

However, Sion remained calm as usual,

“Do I care about that? You’ll be given the death penalty if you don’t listen to my command.”

He said that mercilessly.

Then, the lady, the one called Ferris by Sion said,

“I’m from the Eris family, but I’m not the master. Besides, I’m not formally your subordinate. I have no reason to listen to your order...”

But Sion merely refuted her words easily,

“I knew you would say that, so I let Lucile read this report too and got his permission. Lucile said that this report’s content was rather meaningful. He said that if Ferris made this plan fail...for some reason, Iris will die. So Ferris, if you can’t escort Ryner properly, Iris might die, you know?”

“Un. No problems. I have to protect my own life...”

But Sion immediately interrupted Ferris and chuckled,

“You’re too naïve, Ferris. Things aren’t that simple. According to Sion, if you don’t follow what I say, the Wynnit dango shop may be obliterated immediately.”

Immediately.

Ferris said with a wavering tone that seemed like it wasn’t there before and said,

“You!? You despicable bastards!?”

At this moment, a clear man’s voice rang from somewhere.

‘You’re to leave in two minutes’.

It’s unknown where this voice came from. Ryner looked around and couldn’t see anyone, and could only tell that the voice came from a certain place.

But on hearing that voice,

“Ugh...that guy’s serious...”

Ferris groaned.

After saying that, she suddenly drew her sword out and pointed it at Ryner’s neck.

She then said this,

“That’s how it is. There’s no time. Let’s go, sex maniac.”

“Ah? What do you mean by that? This has nothing to do with me! Sion! Why do you always act on your own all the time...WA...!”

However, Ryner’s words were interrupted by the sword that was poked 1mm deep into his neck.

Ferris oppressed him.

She gave an emotionless face that was really scary and stared at Ryner.

“I said that we have no time. Choose! Chop your head off? Chop your body off or listen to me? Which one?”

Her expression looked like she was serious. Actually, from the moment Ryner met her, she had never shown any emotion on that serious look of hers, so it

looked like she was playing serious all the time...

“Ugh.”

Ryner got up as if he was running away, and tried hard to get away from the sword that was near his throat.

“You’ll pay for this, Sion!”

He angrily raged at Sion, who looked like he foresaw what was going to change in the future as he smiled.

“Haha. Looks like you finally thought through this.”

“Who would!? I’ll definitely...”

At this moment, that voice which came from somewhere rang again.

‘1 minute left.’

“I’d say! What’s with this ominous voice!?”

Ryner roared. Ferris said,

“Damn it. There’s no time. The dango’s in danger. I’m going then, king.”

“Un. I’ll leave Ryner to you then, Ferris.”

“Un.”

“I say. Why are you randomly...eh?”

Just when Ryner was about to roar out again, a metal block quickly swung right at his eyes.

It was Ferris’ longsword. She didn’t use the blade itself, but the side of it to smack Ryner in the face.

“UWAH!?”

Ryner was sent flying away, and his consciousness nearly went just like that.

He collapsed onto the floor, and didn’t even have the strength to get up. However...

On seeing this, Ferris said,

“Very good.”

“WHAT’S GOOD ABOUT THIS!?”

“Oh, to think you’re so energetic. How about this move?”

Ferris said and stepped on Ryner’s back hard.

This time, Ryner didn’t even have the strength to move. Ferris looked down at him while he was lying limp on the floor and said, “Let’s go then, partner.”

“...What? On what basis are we partners anyway...I have no interests in such things you know...ARGH!?”

Ferris gave a fatal blow to Ryner. She grabbed him by the collar and slowly pulled him and moved forward.

Just like that, these two incompatible people began their journey.

Even though Ryner was unconscious, and Ferris was still emotionless...

What will the future behold for them?

Or rather, will Ryner ever wake up?

Nobody knows for now.

After watching both of them leave, Sion returned to his throne.

He smiled and raised Ryner’s report again.

The first page.

How many times had he read it since yesterday?

He muttered to this empty space,

“Lucile, is this where I’m going to?”

And,

“I don’t know.”

A voice rang. A man’s figure suddenly appeared in front of Sion, and Sion didn’t show any surprise at all.

The man said,

“But that’s one of the paths to the future. This isn’t your final destination,

which is why I haven't killed you. A king's an item, a gear in the country. The gear won't spoil when it's new. Fufu, you're still considered new."

Sion stared at this person who said such words casually.

This was Sion's current stand.

This was also one of the things that belonged to him.

He had power, but in contrast, he lost a lot of things.

However, he continued to remain determined to move forward. No matter what he will lose, no matter what sad things he will face.

That's because this was the path he decided to walk on.

At this moment, Sion's eyes again fell on Ryner's report.

A new path was illustrated on it.

"That's good."

Sion muttered.

It's alright if Ryner took that path.

"Even though that path is different from mine..."

The content of the report began with these words,

Men don't like death.

They don't like to kill.

They don't like reluctant tears, and they don't like to cry for nothing.

What's the feeling like when someone can't choose their own life?

How does it feel to have a family member die?

What is the emotional state when someone a person likes dies?

Nobody wants to face these, but why is the world laughing and thirsting greedily for this meaningless sadness?

I've never thought of trying to change anything. But if I don't change it, sadness will be unavoidable, and I don't want to lose anything...

It may be troublesome to say this, but...

It's time to move forward. I've always been trying my best not to face this problem head on, but if there's a need, why not look back at my past head on?

And,

To enjoy a world where a person won't lose anything and anyone.

A wonderful world where that girl and Kiefer won't cry, Tai, Tony and Fualu won't die, and Sion wouldn't be in a dilemma.

Moving forward to a world where everyone is happy and could sleep all day.

Ryner Lute.

Afterword

On a certain day, the super capable, super shrewd M-san (supervisor: is this like chopping people up with a smile? That's disgusting) who was able to develop me today said, "Kagami-kun. I heard that there's a 'Dragon Cup' in Tokyo. Want to take part?"

"Heh? What's that?"

"Un, six authors are to come up with a short story and fight for the serialization on Dragon Magazine through readers' votes...want to take part?"

Of course I do.

That's 1 month before my first work 'Warrior-officer El-win', and I immediately agreed.

"If I can take part in it, I'll definitely try it."

"Un, there's a planning meeting on Monday. You have two days to raise some simple plot for this 'simple creative planning for work'."

"Ha!? Two days...is it?Really?"

"Really."

Why, WHY DIDN'T YOU TELL ME EARLIIIIIEEEERRRR!!??

I really tried my best to restrain myself as I answered,

"I...I got it...I'll do my best."

That was the process—

Speaking of which, this is Kagami Takaya who took the mission of the fourth 'Dragon Cup'!

Nice to meet everyone!

I feel like the leader of a pack of berserkers...

Just like that, the 'Legend of the Legendary Heroes' has finished its release of the first volume. Having met everyone now, how do you feel about this?

Right now, let me explain this work to those readers who never read the work itself—

This work originated from the weekly Dragon Magazine. 6 authors were to come up with a story and let the readers vote for the work they wanted to read. In a certain sense, it was a work that was born with some competitiveness.

Thus, with everyone's generous support 'DenYuuDen's finally released.

I supported this intense battle that lasted for two months and succeeded—

Like the above illustration, I'm the leader of the berserkers, the fourth generation 'Dragon Emperor'...

So let's not talk about this!

Ah, speaking of which, I have to mention this to everyone. During this competition, another work got the same number of votes and became the fourth generation 'Dragon Emperor'...

This work is called EME, and under the shady planning of the editorial department, 'DenYuuDen' and 'EME' are currently rivals and may end up with a bloody battle of life and death...

But 'EME'...

Has a completely different style from my works. It has a bystander view, the protagonist's cool, and there's a lot of Hollywood-style actions. The term 'cool' seems to be the reason why this work exist.

While our lead that has no will here. Who knows if we can fight against them...

My heart would ache as I think about this every time (tears).

Just like that, 'DenYuuDen' and 'EME' competed in the questionnaire, and the current Dragon Magazine showed a completely equal competition...

As for this work, 'Densetsu no Yūsha no Densetsu - The Ambition In A Kingdom of Afternoon Naps', it was started before the serialization.

The serialized story had much more comedic elements. In contrast, the characters in this long story seem to be a little more stern in their lifestyles (laughs).

Anyway, to the readers who're reading this work for the first time, the story starts from this long series.

Please enjoy yourself as you read.

As for the readers who read the serialized portion, I shall reveal the setting that was completely designated as a secret.

Now I finally know why they started on such a journey (laughs).

Speaking of which, the creation of the scenario in the opening of this afterwords was a complex idea that was compressed. After discussing with the editor, we decided to split them into long and short forms.

I suppose everyone should know this. The start of the story was written in my easygoing style, but ever since the middle...

I assure you that everyone was shocked (laughs).

Just like that.

I've almost finished what I wanted to say.

But like I mentioned it before, I still have to thank everyone.

This work was unexpectedly popular. The initial plan was to serialize for 6 months, and now it went past that and continued to be serialized. This is thanks to you readers for voting for this work generously and cheered for me, Toyota-san who made these beautiful illustrations for me, everyone on the editorial department and everyone else from the other departments who chipped in.

Either way, books can only survive when people are willing to embrace and read them, so I feel that this work was completed with everyone.

No matter how it was,

For example, maybe you are just flipping this book in the bookstore or recommending this book to a friend, but this little action will bring about change.

And through the planning of letting the readers express their views in this Dragon Cup allowed me to reaffirm this again, which made me exceptionally delighted.

I really want to thank everyone.

Let's continue writing together in the future.

So, the next time we meet is...

I still need everyone to support me! (laughs)

See you next time.

Kagami Takaya

Translator's Notes and References

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